**OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE COURTS**

**July 31, 2020**

**Regarding COVID-19 and the Operation of the Office of Administrative Courts for All Hearings**

The Office of Administrative Courts (OAC) remains open and continues to conduct all hearings.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic state of emergency and the existing Executive Orders from the Governor, as well as local municipalities, all at the Office of Administrative Courts (Denver, Colorado Springs, and Grand Junction) **shall be conducted by telephone** **or video conference** for the near future.

**The OAC will consider allowing in person hearings but only in limited circumstances in late October 2020.**

The OAC utilizes Google Hangouts for the recording of the telephone and video conference hearings.  Parties will receive a Google Hangout calendar invite on the afternoon prior to their scheduled hearing, with the telephone conference number, as well as a pin number, to join the scheduled hearing.  Parties are responsible for telephoning that telephone number on the time and date of the hearing.  The parties should also have available the telephone numbers of any witnesses participating in the hearing.  The ALJ will conference in the witnesses to the Google Hangout hearing.   The parties shall ensure that all witnesses have copies of any exhibits that will be referenced during the telephonic hearing.

**Interpretation or ADA Accommodations:**

**In the event that a litigant or witness cannot participate in a telephone or video conference hearing, due to the need of interpretation or ADA accommodation, the party should notify the Office of Administrative Courts immediately.  The Office of Administrative Courts will ensure that all litigants and witnesses who have interpretation and/or ADA accommodation needs are able to participate in the hearing. If virtual options are not available for interpretation, the OAC will hold an in-person hearing, while maintaining social distancing to protect all parties involved.**

**The following procedures apply to all other types of in-person hearings at OAC**:

* For in-person hearings, please note that the number of persons who will be allowed to be present in the courtroom during the proceeding will be limited to counsel for the litigants and the parties themselves. If an interpreter is needed, the interpreter will also be allowed in the courtroom. All other anticipated lay or expert testimony will be taken telephonically or by deposition so as to adhere to the current social distancing practices in order to enhance the safety and wellbeing of all involved in the hearing process.
* All participants will be required to wear facemasks during the hearing, as well as while at the OAC office.
* Parties wishing to call witnesses by phone should also file a written request with the OAC to insure that procedural arrangements have been made to ensure a smooth hearing and an accurate recording.
* For all hearings where at least one party and/or witness will appear by phone, all parties shall ensure that all parties and/or witnesses and the OAC receives electronic copies of all documents and exhibits at least three (3) business days prior to the scheduled proceeding.
* Motions and pleadings may be submitted electronically to the OAC through the OAC’s electronic case filing system, Court Link, or by email to the following general email accounts:

All general services cases at OAC-GS@state.co.us.

Denver workers’ compensation cases at OAC-DVR@state.co.us

Colorado Springs workers’ compensation cases at OAC-CSP@state.co.us

Grand Junction workers’ compensation cases at OAC-GJT@state.co.us

The health and safety of the public working with Office of Administrative Courts is of paramount importance. To that end, please note that the above procedures are subject to change as the COVID-19 situation evolves. Should additional changes be warranted, you will be updated. In the interim, please note that the OAC is open and prepared to adjudicate the matters before the Court with the above noted modifications. Please feel free to contact any of our offices with questions and/or refer to the OAC website for additional information.

Denver: (303) 866-2000

Colorado Springs: (719) 576-2958

Grand Junction: (970)-248-7340

Sincerely,



Matthew Azer

Director & Chief Administrative Law Judge