



Best Practices for Witnesses Participating in USCG Zoom Hearings

Below are important tips for witnesses when participating in United States Coast Guard (USCG) virtual hearings held on the Zoom for Government application.

1. Prior to Hearing:

- a. Test Your Equipment – test your internet and Zoom connection prior to the hearing. The USCG uses the Zoom for Government application, which functions the same as the standard Zoom application. To test your setup prior to the hearing, visit <https://zoom.us/test>. You can log into Zoom via your phone or computer; logging in via computer is recommended but not required. If you log in via a computer, you will be given the option to download the Zoom app or log in via the browser. Either option is fine.
- b. Obtain Meeting ID & Password – make sure you are provided with the Zoom meeting ID and password for the hearing. The party or representative who requested your testimony is responsible for providing you with this information.
Do not share the meeting ID and password with anyone.
- c. Obtain Copy of Exhibits/Documents – make sure the party or representative who requested your testimony provides you with copies of all exhibits/documents you will use during your testimony. These can be either in hardcopy form (i.e. – paper) or electronic. If you only have electronic copies of these documents, make sure you can view these documents and also participate in the Zoom video hearing at the same time.
- d. Telephone Help Number – make sure the party or representative who requested your testimony provides you their telephone number to call if you have problems logging into Zoom.
- e. Your Surroundings – following these suggestions will improve the video quality:
 - i. Wear a solid color, not a pattern.
 - ii. Check lighting – ideally you want the main light source in the room facing you (strong light coming behind you can blind the camera).
 - iii. Choose a solid neutral wall behind you.
 - iv. Set yourself up in a private, quiet room.

2. During Hearing:

- a. Log into Zoom for Government – when it is time for you to testify, if you are using a computer, go to <https://www.zoomgov.com/> and use the Meeting ID and password to log into the hearing. If you are using a phone, log in through your Zoom app or enter the above internet address into your phone web browser.
- b. Provide Actual Name – if you log into Zoom with an account, make sure your account lists your actual name (not a nickname). If you log into Zoom as a guest, then type in your actual name (not nickname) when prompted to enter name.
- c. Waiting Room – once you log into Zoom, you will be initially placed into a virtual “waiting room.” Once the judge is ready, you will be admitted into the hearing itself.
- d. Formal Proceeding – even though this is a virtual hearing, this is still a formal proceeding, and the following protocols must be followed:
 - i. Do not communicate with anyone else when testifying. This means no texting or calling anyone from another device, and no talking to anyone in the same room.
 - ii. If there is another person in the room who can overhear your testimony, you must inform the judge of this person.
 - iii. When speaking, look directly into the monitor.
 - iv. Pay attention and do not multi-task (i.e. – no searching the internet, no playing a game, etc.).
 - v. Let the representative/attorney or judge finish speaking before answering questions.
 - vi. If an objection is made, stop speaking and let the judge rule on the objection.
 - vii. **Any recording of the hearing is absolutely prohibited.**