

South Carolina Supreme Court Issues Order on Juror Use of Computers and Cell Phones

On July 20, 2009, the Supreme Court of South Carolina entered an administrative order regarding the use of computers and personal communication devices by jurors. Order No. 2009-07-20-01. The order supplements an August 25, 2000 order, which required jurors to “leave their cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices with the clerk’s office ...when they arrive at the courthouse in the morning and may retrieve them during lunch



breaks and at the end of the day.” Order No. 2000-08-25-01.

The 2009 order observes that the “use of personal communication devices has continued to increase dramatically.” Order No. 2009-07-20-01. In response to this continuing trend, the Supreme Court of South Carolina has ordered that until a juror’s service is concluded, the juror shall not:

- (d) use a computer, cellular phone, or other electronic device with communication capabilities, or any other method, to obtain or disclose information about the case when they are not in court. Information about the case includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - (i) information about a party, witness, attorney, or other officer;
 - (ii) news accounts of the case;
 - (iii) information collected through juror research on any topics raised or testimony offered by any witness;
 - (iv) information collected through juror research on any other topic the juror might think would be helpful in deciding the case.

Id.

The 2009 order goes on to provide that notice of these specific rules must be given to all South Carolina jurors.