

Pinal County Superior Court Clerk Kristi Youtsey Ruiz and her staff have provided a new, more convenient method for county residents to fill out those scary jury questionnaires that turn up in some people's mailboxes. Scary because some folks think they're getting a summons to appear in court.

Ruiz, who also serves as the Pinal County jury commissioner, wants people to understand that the jury questionnaires, which are mailed to some residents twice a year, are merely a way for her department to maintain a viable jury pool.

"Whenever we do select someone for jury duty," Ruiz said, "we send them a jury summons, ordering them to appear at a specific court, on a specified day and time. The jury questionnaire is just that, a simple form that requires minimal information for our records."

According to Ruiz, her department mails out questionnaires every six months, and sometime toward the end of this week, some 20,000 eligible Pinal County residents will be receiving jury questionnaires to be filled out and returned within 10 days of receipt.

However, beginning with this week's batch of questionnaires, the recipients have the choice of going online to fill out their forms rather than having to sit down at the kitchen table, answering the yes-no questions by putting a check mark in the appropriate columns and then putting the completed form back into the mailbox.

Aside from answering a few basic questions such as "are you a citizen of the United States" and "are you at least 18 years old," recipients are required to fill in the blanks opposite such standard informational queries as name, address, phone number, date of birth, occupation and so forth.

The forms can be filled out very quickly online by accessing the jury questionnaire Web site at <https://pinaljury.az.gov>. The site is available 24/7. As soon as the Jury Imaging page comes up, individuals must enter their identification number located on the questionnaire and their date of birth before they can have access to the form. Once that's done, they can simply answer the questions and then follow the directions for submitting the finished form.

The online method cannot be used for requesting an excuse from jury duty. That must be done by filling out the appropriate section of the form and mailing it back to the Jury Department at no cost. Persons requesting to be excused from jury duty will be required to provide verification for the reasons or conditions that would prevent them from serving.

"We realize that with so many people accustomed to conducting business on the Internet, that this would be something that would appeal to them as opposed to the old-fashioned method of searching for a pen or pencil and then clearing a space somewhere on a flat surface and then, of course, having to fold the document and take it out to the mailbox," said Ruiz. "We feel that by providing the online option, many people will find it more convenient and a much easier method for submitting these jury questionnaires,"

Of course, the usual caution: "Failure to respond is punishable by law," applies to both the printed and online versions. Anyone requiring assistance or additional information should call 866-5311.