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SHOWING UP TO COURT AT THE WAKE COUNTY CRIMINAL COURTHOUSE

Courthouse Location

The Wake County Justice Center is at:

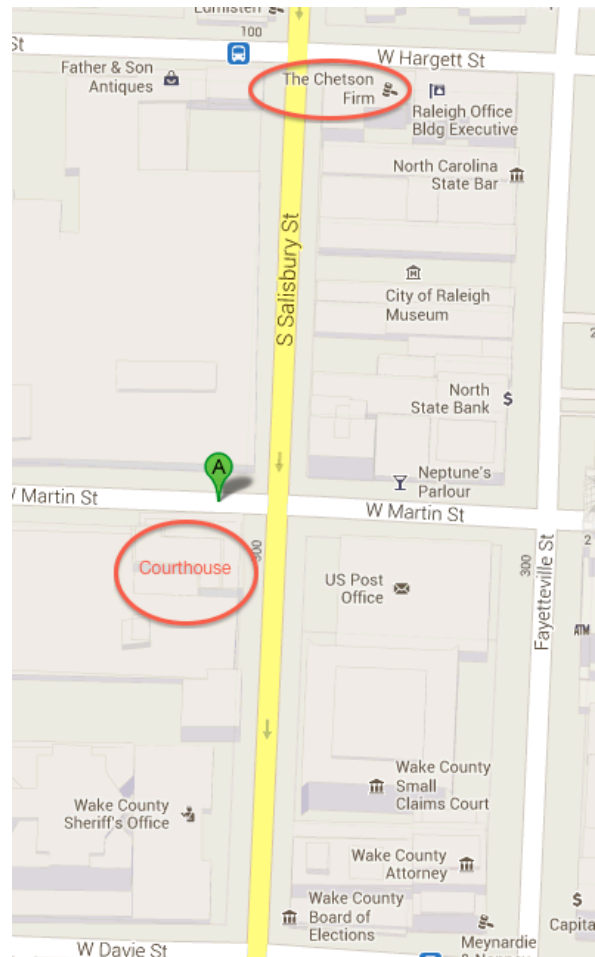
300 S. Salisbury St.
Raleigh, NC 27601
Phone: (919) 792-4000

The front entrance of the courthouse is on Salisbury Street, south of Martin and north of Davie streets. The rear entrance – also accessible to the public – is on Nash Street.

Note: The old courthouse is on Fayetteville Street and is still used for civil matters, including civil domestic violence matters such as 50B restraining orders.

Where Do I Park?

Limited meter-fed parking (with either 1 or 2 hour time limits) is available on the street. Your best bet is to park at one of the several downtown parking lots. The Moore Square Parking lot is located on Wilmington St. (two blocks east of the courthouse), just north of Martin Street. They accept cash and major credit cards. Bring \$10 just in case, but you probably won't need to pay that much in parking.



When Should I Get There?

Either your case is set for AM, PM, or NC (All Day). If your court date is a morning court date (AM), District Court starts at 9:00 AM. You should arrive at 8:30 AM so that you can make it through the metal detectors and get seated in your courtroom ready for calendar call.

If your court date is an afternoon (PM) court date, District Court starts at 2:00 PM. You should arrive by 1:30 PM so that you make it through the metal detectors and get seated in your courtroom ready for calendar call.

If your court date is an all day (NC) court date, it means you need to show up at any time that day before 1:00 PM to handle the matter. I will contact you so that we can coordinate a time to show up at the courthouse together.

What Do I Wear?

Men: Slacks, button-shirt, no t-shirts, no logos on shirts. Comfortable “church” clothes or “business casual.” There’s no need to wear a tie or jacket unless I tell you to do so.

Women: Slacks, blouse, or skirt. Comfortable “church” clothes or “business casual.”

There is no reason to wear a full suit unless I tell you to do so.

Where Do I Go in the Courthouse?

You will go through metal detectors. Disposition Court (for traffic tickets) is located on the first floor in 101.

If you’re in District Court (misdemeanors, including DWIs), you will go to the Second Floor. Take the escalators up to the Second Floor. (Stairs are faster.) Confirm your courtroom – sometimes they change – by looking at the monitors outside the courtrooms.

Traffic and Minor Misdemeanors are in Disposition Court 101.

Domestic Violence cases are in 303 on the Third Floor.

Misdemeanor Appeals are in Superior Court in room 401 on the Fourth Floor.

People’s Court (where the alleged victim has sworn out a warrant against you) is in 302 or 304 on the Third Floor.

Felonies that have not been indicted are in 301 on the Third Floor

Felonies that have been indicted are in Superior Court on the Seventh Floor – either 701 through 704. Confirm your courtroom – sometimes they change – by looking at the monitors outside the courtrooms on the Seventh Floor.

DWI Cases Marked for Special Setting are in either 403, 404, or 302.

First Appearance. If the person is still in custody, then the First Appearance for most cases is held in 304. Domestic Violence First Appearances usually happen in courtroom 303 in the Courthouse. Felony First Appearances where the person has been released from custody are usually held in courtroom 4D in the Courthouse.

What if I'm Late for Court?

If you're a little bit late – 15-20 minutes – don't panic. When you get to the courtroom, you'll probably make the second calendar call.

If you're very late – 45 minutes or more – or know you'll be very late or miss the court date, you must let me know so that I can pull your file and give you time to get into court that morning or afternoon.

Generally, you need to make all your court dates. But I can try to avoid you being Called & Failed. If you have a legitimate emergency – child is sick, car is broken, you're sick, etc. – the court will probably excuse your absence, and we will get a new court date.

If you simply miss a court date because you forgot, you will be Called & Failed and an Order for Arrest will be issued for you. You are liable to be arrested. You may end up forfeiting your bond. You need to call me immediately so we can rectify the situation.

What Do I Do in Court?

Turn off your cell phone. There are usually two calendar calls, one right at the beginning of the court session at either 9:00 (morning session) or 2:00 (afternoon session).

If you hear your name called, call out my name "Attorney Damon Chetson" in response.

If you don't hear your name called, check to make sure you're in the right courtroom.

During these preliminary court dates, you will generally not need to do anything. You do not need to bring anything to court except for your driver's license/identification, unless I tell you otherwise.

You should not talk to anyone about your case. You should not interact with the alleged victim if you see the alleged victim in court. You should stay in the courtroom until I tell you to leave.

If this is your first appearance in this case, you may be asked by the Court to sign a Waiver of Counsel. This is a document where you waive your right to court appointed counsel. Because you have hired me to represent you, the Court will not appoint counsel. Appointed counsel (or Public Defenders) are assigned to poor defendants who cannot afford to pay for an attorney.

How Long Will I need to Schedule for my Court Session?

If you are not going to trial and we are merely continuing the case (scheduling a new court date a month later), generally you will be out of court by 11:00 am for morning session or 4:00 for afternoon session. Sometimes the courtroom is really backed up, and you may be there for the entire morning session – 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM – or the entire afternoon session – 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

If you're going to trial, you will be there for the whole session, which sometimes will run long.

If it's a misdemeanor appeal or a felony trial, the trial will take more than one session, and probably more than one day.

What is Going on in Court?

In District Court, you're watching the processing of cases. People are being informed of their rights, some have worked out plea agreements with the District Attorney, and are pleading guilty and being sentenced, others are having their cases dismissed. At the end of the court session, there may be a trial or two.

Many cases are being "continued," which is legal jargon for a delay. The delay is usually for a month or two. The delay may be requested by the State, or the Defense. Your case will probably be continued several times before there is a resolution.

Where are you, my lawyer, during all of this?

I am in the courthouse assisting you or one of my other clients. I usually have a number of clients to handle on a given day. That requires me to go from courtroom to courtroom to check on the progress of each of those cases. I am working as quickly as I can to get you in and out of court as efficiently as possible, understanding that you have work, a life, and a family to take care of.

Sometimes I will go off into a room to talk to a police officer, another lawyer, or an Assistant District Attorney about your case, or one of my other cases. Sometimes I am collecting "discovery" (evidence, police reports, test results) from the Assistant District Attorney about your or another one of my cases.

As quickly as I work, sometimes delays can't be avoided. Perhaps the officer, ADA, or judge is not available. Perhaps there are 30 cases in front of yours.

I will be in the courtroom shortly after 9 AM or 2 PM.

Occasionally I have a trial elsewhere in the courthouse, elsewhere in another county, in federal court, or I am out of town. On these occasions, I will have another attorney come

into the courtroom to “continue” your case. I will let you know personally if I have to do this. And, if so, your case will not be prejudiced. Ultimately you have hired me to represent you in your matter, which is what I will do.

I do this – continue cases for other attorneys – occasionally when they can’t make it to their clients’ court dates.

Why Can’t We Pick a New Court Date that is Convenient for me?

Court dates in District Court are almost always set according to the officer’s next court date. That’s because officers may have arrested a dozen people in the last month, and will have a single court date during which they are present as a witness for all of the defendants they arrested recently. The officer’s next date is usually a month after his current date.

That said, if you know you’re going to be out of town on a business trip or other scheduled event, we can ask the court to set a court date not for the officer’s next date, but for his date, say, two months from now. No guarantees, but it doesn’t hurt to ask.

What happens as a result of my attendance at Court?

Usually you are given a new court date. You are responsible for showing up at the Court at your next court date. I will send you a reminder, by email or letter, in advance of your court date. But you should mark it on your schedule.

If something urgent comes up – a sick loved one, a trip to the hospital, a death in the family – I can go into court and request a new court date in advance. New court dates are always at the judge’s discretion, so there are no guarantees that one will be granted.