

## CHAPTER 885

## WITNESSES AND ORAL TESTIMONY

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## GENERAL PROVISIONS

**885.01 Subpoenas, who may issue.** The subpoena need not be sealed, and may be signed and issued as follows:

(1) By any judge or clerk of a court or court commissioner or municipal judge, within the territory in which the officer or the court of which he or she is the officer has jurisdiction, to require the attendance of witnesses and their production of lawful instruments of evidence in any action, matter or proceeding pending or to be examined into before any court, magistrate, officer, arbitrator, board, committee or other person authorized to take testimony in the state.

(2) By the attorney general or any district attorney or person acting in his stead, to require the attendance of witnesses, in behalf of the state, in any court or before any magistrate and from any part of the state.

(3) By the chairman of any committee of any county board, town board, common council or village board to investigate the affairs of the county, town, city or village, or the official conduct or affairs of any officer thereof.

(4) By any arbitrator, coroner, medical examiner, board, commission, commissioner, examiner, committee or other person authorized to take testimony, or by any member of a board, commission, authority or committee which is authorized to take testimony, within their jurisdictions, to require the attendance of witnesses, and their production of documentary evidence before them, respectively, in any matter, proceeding or examination authorized by law; and likewise by the secretary of revenue and by any

agent of the department of agriculture, trade and consumer protection.

**History:** 1971 c. 164; 1973 c. 272, 305, 336; 1977 c. 29 s. 1650m (4); 1977 c. 305; 1979 c. 34.

See note to 227.09, citing 68 Atty. Gen. 251.

**885.02 Form of subpoena. (1)** The subpoena may be in the following form:

## SUBPOENA.

STATE OF WISCONSIN,

\_\_\_ County.

THE STATE OF WISCONSIN, To \_\_\_:

You are hereby required to appear before \_\_\_\_, a municipal judge in and for the county, at the municipal judge's office in the town of \_\_\_\_ (or before \_\_\_\_, designating the court, officer or person and place of appearance), on the \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_ o'clock in the \_\_\_ noon of that day, to give evidence in a certain cause then and there to be tried between \_\_\_\_, plaintiff, and \_\_\_\_, defendant, on the part of the \_\_\_\_ (or to give evidence in the matter [state sufficient to identify the matter or proceeding in which the evidence is to be given] then and there to be heard, on the part of \_\_\_\_).

Given under my hand this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_, 19\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_ (Give official title)

(2) For a subpoena requiring the production of materials, the following or its equivalent may be added to the foregoing form (immediately before the attestation clause): and you are further required to bring with you the following papers and documents (describing them as accurately as possible).

**History:** 1977 c. 305; 1979 c. 110

**885.03 Service of subpoena.** Any subpoena may be served by any person by exhibiting and

reading it to the witness, or by giving him a copy thereof, or by leaving such copy at his abode.

**885.04 Municipal judge; subpoena served in state.** A subpoena to require attendance before a municipal judge may be served anywhere in the state if authorized by the municipal judge, and shall require the attendance of any witness so served.

History: 1977 c 305

**885.05 Witness' and interpreter's fees.**

(1) The fees of witnesses and interpreters shall be as follows:

(a) For attending before a municipal judge, or any arbitrators or any board or committee thereof of any town, city or village, for witnesses \$4 for each day, for interpreters \$4 per day.

(b) For attending before any other officer, board or committee, for witnesses \$5 for each day, for interpreters \$10 per half day.

(bn) For attending before any other court, for witnesses \$16 for each day, for interpreters \$10 per half day.

(c) For traveling, at the rate of 10 cents per mile going and returning from his residence (if within the state); or, if without, from the point where he crosses the state boundary in coming to attend to the place of attendance, and returning by the usually traveled route between such points.

(d) The county board in any county may establish a witness fee higher than the \$16 per day fee under par. (bn) or a traveling expense rate higher than 10 cents per mile under par. (c) or both.

(2) A witness or interpreter shall be entitled to fees only for the time he shall be in actual and necessary attendance as such; and shall not be entitled to receive pay in more than one action or proceeding for the same attendance or travel on behalf of the same party. No person shall be entitled to fees as a witness or interpreter while attending court as an officer or juror; nor shall any attorney or counsel in any cause be allowed any fee as a witness or interpreter therein.

History: 1971 c 122; 1977 c 305 s 64; 1979 c 34, 219.

NOTE: Chapter 219, laws of 1979, which created (1) (bn) and amended (1) (b) and (d), states in section 6 (3) that the act expires July 1, 1983.

**885.06 Witness' fees, prepayment. (1)**

Except when subpoenaed on behalf of the state or on behalf of a municipality in forfeiture actions no person shall be obliged to attend as a witness in any civil action, matter or proceeding unless his fees are paid or tendered to him for one day's attendance and for travel; provided that tender of witness fees in the form of a check drawn by the state, a political subdivision of the

state, a municipal corporation of the state or a department or officer of any of them which is payable to bearer or payable to the order of the person named in such subpoena shall oblige the person named in such subpoena to attend as a witness in accordance with the lawful requirements of such subpoena.

(2) No witness on behalf of the state in any civil action, matter or proceeding, or in any criminal action or proceeding, on behalf of either party, or on behalf of a municipality in forfeiture actions shall be entitled to any fee in advance, but shall be obliged to attend upon the service of a subpoena as therein lawfully required.

**885.07 State witnesses in civil actions and municipal witnesses in forfeiture actions, how paid.**

Every witness on behalf of the state in any civil action or proceeding may file with the clerk of the court where the same is pending his affidavit of attendance and travel, and his fees shall, upon the certificate of such clerk, countersigned by the attorney general, district attorney, or acting state's attorney, be paid out of the state treasury, and shall be charged to the legal expense appropriation to the attorney general. In forfeiture actions by municipalities the clerk shall tax witness fees; however witness fees for police officers of any such municipality when collected shall be paid by the clerk to the treasurer of the municipality.

**885.08 State witnesses in criminal cases, how paid.**

The fees of witnesses on the part of the state in every criminal action or proceeding, and of every person who is committed to jail in default of security for his appearance as a witness, shall be paid by the county in which the action or proceeding is had. The clerk of the court upon proof of his attendance, travel or confinement shall give each such witness or person a certificate of the number of days' attendance or confinement, the number of miles traveled, and the amount of compensation due him, which certificate shall be received for by such witness or person, and the county treasurer shall pay the amount thereof on surrender of the certificate.

Cross Reference: For fees of expert witnesses, see 971.16 (1).

**885.09 Compensation of nonresident or poor witness.**

When any witness shall attend a court of record in behalf of the state, and it shall appear that he came from outside this state, or that he is poor, the court may order he be paid a specific reasonable sum for his expense and attendance, in lieu of his fees; and thereupon the clerk shall give a certificate for such sum, with a

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copy of such order affixed, and the same shall be paid as other court certificates are paid.

**885.10 Witness for indigent defendant.**

Upon satisfactory proof of the inability of the defendant to procure the attendance of witnesses for his or her defense, the judge or court commissioner, in any criminal action or proceeding to be tried or heard before him or her, may direct the witnesses to be subpoenaed as he or she determines is proper and necessary, upon the defendant's oath or affidavit or that of the defendant's attorney. Witnesses so subpoenaed shall be paid their fees in the manner that witnesses for the state therein are paid.

History: 1977 c. 305.

**885.11 Disobedient witness. (1) DAMAGES RECOVERABLE.** If any person obliged to attend as a witness shall fail to do so without any reasonable excuse, he shall be liable to the aggrieved party for all damages occasioned by such failure, to be recovered in an action.

**(2) ATTENDANCE COMPELLED.** Every court, in case of unexcused failure to appear before it, may issue an attachment to bring such witness before it for the contempt, and also to testify.

**(3) PUNISHMENT IN COURTS.** Inexcusable failure to attend any court of record shall be a contempt of the court, punishable by a fine not exceeding \$20.

**(4) SAME.** Unexcused failure to attend a court not of record shall be a contempt, and the witness shall be fined all the costs of his apprehension, unless he shall show reasonable cause for his failure; in which case the party procuring him to be apprehended shall pay said costs.

**(5) STRIKING OUT PLEADING.** If any party to an action or proceeding shall unlawfully refuse or neglect to appear or testify or depose therein (either within or without the state), the court may, also, strike out his pleading, and give judgment against him as upon default or failure of proof.

Sub. (5) is broad enough to include the failure to produce documents at a discovery examination, but a party cannot delay 7 years before making the motion to strike the pleading "Unlawfully" means without legal excuse and this must be determined at a hearing. *Gipson Lumber Co. v. Schickling*, 56 W (2d) 164, 201 NW (2d) 500.

Trial court did not abuse discretion in dismissing plaintiff's complaint for failure to comply with discovery order. *Furrenes v. Ford Motor Co.* 79 W (2d) 260, 255 NW (2d) 511.

**885.12 Coercing witnesses before officers and boards.** If any person, without reasonable excuse, fails to attend as a witness, or to testify as lawfully required before any arbitrator, coroner, medical examiner, board, commission, commissioner, examiner, committee, or

other officer or person authorized to take testimony, or to produce a book or paper which he was lawfully directed to bring, or to subscribe his deposition when correctly reduced to writing, any judge of a court of record or court commissioner in the county where the person was obliged to attend may, upon sworn proof of the facts, issue an attachment for him, and unless he shall purge the contempt and go and testify or do such other act as required by law, may commit him to close confinement in the county jail until he shall so testify or do such act, or be discharged according to law. The sheriff of the county shall execute the commitment.

History: 1973 c. 272.

Cross Reference: See 785.06

**885.15 Immunity.** No person shall be excused from attending, testifying or producing books, papers, and documents before any court in a prosecution under s. 134.05 on the ground or for the reason that the testimony or evidence required of him may tend to criminate him, or to subject him to a penalty or forfeiture. But no person who testifies or produces evidence in obedience to the command of the court in such prosecution shall be liable to any suit or prosecution, civil or criminal, for or on account of any transaction, matter or thing concerning which he may so testify or produce evidence; provided, that no person shall be exempted from prosecution and punishment for perjury committed in so testifying.

**885.16 Transactions with deceased or insane persons.** No party or person in his own behalf or interest, and no person from, through or under whom a party derives his interest or title, shall be examined as a witness in respect to any transaction or communication by him personally with a deceased or insane person in any civil action or proceeding, in which the opposite party derives his title or sustains his liability to the cause of action from, through or under such deceased or insane person, or in any action or proceeding in which such insane person is a party prosecuting or defending by guardian, unless such opposite party shall first, in his own behalf, introduce testimony of himself or some other person concerning such transaction or communication, and then only in respect to such transaction or communication of which testimony is so given or in respect to matters to which such testimony relates. And no stockholder, officer or trustee of a corporation in its behalf or interest, and no stockholder, officer or trustee of a corporation from, through or under whom a

party derives his or its interest or title, shall be so examined, except as aforesaid.

Under the dead man's statute if an objection properly made is overruled, the objecting counsel can cross-examine without risk of waiving his objection; however, if an examination exceeds the scope of the direct examination by questions "beyond the scope," and the examiner elicits the very information he sought to exclude, such examination "beyond the scope" constitutes a waiver of the objection. *Estate of Molay*, 46 W (2d) 450, 175 NW (2d) 254.

While the benefit of the dead man's statute is waived where the opposite party opens the door, such waiver is not effected where, as in the instant case, testimony elicited from an interested survivor established only independent facts made up of physical actions of the parties and no inquiry is made into what, if anything, actually transpired between the decedent and the interested survivor with regard to these actions. *Johnson v. Mielke*, 49 W (2d) 60, 181 NW (2d) 503.

A widow, sued on a note as comaker with her husband, cannot exclude testimony as to transactions with her deceased husband, no evidence of agency being presented. *Keller Implement Co v. Eiting*, 52 W (2d) 460, 190 NW (2d) 508.

An attorney who drew a will which directs that he be retained to probate the estate is not barred from testifying by this section. *Casper v. McDowell*, 58 W (2d) 82, 205 NW (2d) 753.

An interested person may testify as to overhearing a conversation the deceased had with 2 other persons (also since deceased) while the witness was in another room. *Estate of Nale*, 61 W (2d) 654, 213 NW (2d) 552.

The company waived the protection of the statute when it presented principal stockholder's widow as a witness. *Younger v. Rosenow Paper & Supply Co.* 63 W (2d) 548, 217 NW (2d) 841.

In a petition for proof of heirship by the natural son of deceased and cross-petition by deceased's niece and nephew alleging that the son had been adopted by his aunt, testimony by the cross-petitioners' mother, a sister-in-law of deceased, as to conversations with the deceased were not precluded by this section because she did not stand to gain or lose from the direct legal operation and effect of the judgment, and her interest in a judgment in favor of her children was too remote and speculative to bring her within the statute's restrictions. *Estate of Komarr*, 68 W (2d) 473, 228 NW (2d) 681.

Husband of niece of testatrix, who was residuary legatee in prior wills, is not disqualified from testifying as to his conversations with testatrix even though the niece was an incompetent witness under the statute. In re *Estate of Christen*, 72 W (2d) 8, 239 NW (2d) 528.

Protection of dead man's statute was waived where counsel objected to inadmissibility of evidence rather than to incompetency of witness. In *Matter of Estate of Reist*, 91 W (2d) 209, 281 NW (2d) 86 (1979).

**885.17 Transactions with deceased agent.** No party, and no person from, through or under whom a party derives his interest or title, shall be examined as a witness in respect to any transaction or communication by him personally with an agent of the adverse party or an agent of the person from, through or under whom such adverse party derives his interest or title, when such agent is dead or insane, or otherwise legally incompetent as a witness unless the opposite party shall first be examined or examine some other witness in his behalf in respect to some transaction or communication between such agent and such other party or person; or unless the testimony of such agent, at any time taken, be first read or given in evidence by the opposite party; and then, in either case respectively, only in respect to such transaction or communication of which testimony is so given or to the matters to which such testimony relates.

The dead man's statute is not available to benefit the automobile insurer of a corporation concerning a transaction whereby an officer-agent accepted title of his wife's automobile for the corporation, since the insurer did not derive its interest "from, through or under" the corporation by virtue of its contract to insure. *Knutson v. Mueller*, 68 W (2d) 199, 228 NW (2d) 342.

**885.205 Privileged communications.** No dean of men, dean of women or dean of students at any institution of higher education in this state, or any school psychologist at any school in this state, shall be allowed to disclose communications made to such dean or psychologist or advice given by such dean or psychologist in the course of counseling a student, or in the course of investigating the conduct of a student enrolled at such university or school, except:

(1) This prohibition may be waived by the student.

(2) This prohibition does not include communications which such dean needs to divulge for his own protection, or the protection of those with whom he deals, or which were made to him for the express purpose of being communicated to another, or of being made public.

(3) This prohibition does not extend to a criminal case when such dean has been regularly subpoenaed to testify.

**885.23 Blood tests in civil actions.** Whenever it is relevant in a civil action to determine the parentage or identity of any child, person or corpse, the court, by order, shall direct any party to the action and any person involved in the controversy to submit to one or more blood tests as provided in s. 767.48. The results of the tests shall be receivable as evidence in any case where exclusion from parentage is established or where a probability of parentage is shown to exist. Whenever the court orders the blood tests and one of the parties refuses to submit to the tests that fact shall be disclosed upon trial.

History: 1979 c 352.

NOTE: This section is shown as affected by chapter 352, laws of 1979, effective July 1, 1981. The section in effect up to that date is as follows:

"885.23 Blood tests in civil actions. Whenever it is relevant in a civil action to determine the parentage or identity of any child, person or corpse, the court, by order, shall direct any party to the action and any person involved in the controversy to submit to one or more blood tests as provided in s. 52.36. The results of said tests shall constitute conclusive evidence where exclusion is established and shall be receivable as evidence, but only in cases where a definite exclusion is established. Whenever the court orders such blood tests and one of the parties refuses to submit to such tests such fact shall be disclosed upon trial. Notwithstanding s. 52.36 (2) the court shall determine how and by whom the costs of such examination shall be paid."

Under 885.23, 1977 stats., human leukocyte antigen test of blood tissue was inadmissible as evidence that plaintiff was child's father. *J.B. v. A.F.* 92 W (2d) 696, 285 NW (2d) 880 (Ct. App. 1979).

**885.235 Chemical tests for intoxication.**

(1) In any action or proceeding in which it is material to prove that a person was under the influence of an intoxicant when operating or driving a motor vehicle, or while handling a firearm, evidence of the amount of alcohol in such person's blood at the time in question as shown by chemical analysis of a sample of his breath, blood or urine is admissible on the issue of whether he was under the influence of an intoxicant if such sample was taken within 2 hours after the event to be proved. Such chemical analysis shall be given effect as follows without requiring any expert testimony as to its effect:

(a) The fact that the analysis shows that there was five-hundredths of one per cent or less by weight of alcohol in the person's blood is prima facie evidence that he was not under the influence of an intoxicant;

(b) The fact that the analysis shows that there was more than 0.05% but less than 0.1% by weight of alcohol in the person's blood is relevant evidence on the issue of intoxication but is not to be given any prima facie effect;

(c) The fact that the analysis shows that there was 0.1% or more by weight of alcohol in the person's blood is prima facie evidence that he was under the influence of an intoxicant, but shall not, without corroborating physical evidence thereof, be sufficient upon which to find the person guilty of being under the influence of intoxicants.

(2) The concentration of alcohol in the blood shall be taken prima facie to be three-fourths of the concentration of alcohol in the urine.

(2a) The concentration of alcohol in 2100 cubic centimeters of deep lung or alveolar breath shall be prima facie to be equal to the concentration of alcohol in 1 cubic centimeter of blood when equilibrium has been reached.

(3) If the sample of breath, blood or urine was not taken within 2 hours after the event to be proved, evidence of the amount of alcohol in the person's blood as shown by the chemical analysis is admissible only if expert testimony establishes its probative value and may be given prima facie effect only if such effect is established by expert testimony.

(4) The provisions of this section relating to the admissibility of chemical tests for intoxication shall not be construed as limiting the introduction of any other competent evidence bearing on the question of whether or not a person was under the influence of an intoxicant.

History: 1971 c 40; 1973 c 102.

A blood sample taken under 346.71 (2) and forwarded to the department of transportation is admissible in evidence. *Luedtke v. Shedivy*, 51 W (2d) 110, 186 NW (2d) 220.

See note to Art. I, sec. 8, citing *State v. Driver*, 59 W (2d) 35, 207 NW (2d) 850.

**885.24 Actions for public moneys, immunity.**

No witness or party in an action brought upon the bond of a public officer, or in an action by the state or any municipality to recover public money received by or deposited with the defendant, or in any action, proceeding or examination, instituted by or in behalf of the state or any municipality, involving the official conduct of any officer thereof, shall be excused from testifying on the ground that his testimony may expose him to prosecution for any crime, misdemeanor or forfeiture. But no person shall be prosecuted or subjected to any penalty or forfeiture for or on account of any transaction, matter or thing concerning which he may testify, or produce evidence, documentary or otherwise, in such action, proceeding or examination, except a prosecution for perjury committed in giving such testimony.

**885.25 State actions vs. corporations.**

(1) No corporation shall be excused from producing books, papers, tariffs, contracts, agreements, records, files or documents, in its possession, or under its control, in obedience to the subpoena of any court or officer authorized to issue subpoenas, in any civil action which is now or hereafter may be pending, brought by the state against it to recover license fees, taxes, penalties or forfeitures, or to enforce forfeitures, on the ground or for the reason that the testimony or evidence, documentary or otherwise, required of it, may subject it to a penalty or forfeiture, or be excused from making a true answer under oath, by and through its properly authorized officer or agent, when required by law to make such answer to any pleading in any such civil action upon any such ground or for such reason.

(2) No officer, clerk, agent, employe or servant of any corporation in any such action shall be excused from attending or testifying or from producing books, papers, tariffs, contracts, agreements, records, files or documents, in his possession or under his control, in obedience to the subpoena of any court in which any such civil action is pending or before any officer or court empowered or authorized to take deposition or testimony in any such action, in obedience to the subpoena of such officer or court, or of any officer or court empowered to issue a subpoena in that behalf, on the ground or for the reason that the testimony or evidence, documentary or otherwise, required of him, may tend to criminate him or subject him to a penalty or a forfeiture, but no such officer, clerk, agent, employe or servant shall be prosecuted, or subjected to any penalty or forfeiture, for or on account of any transaction, matter or thing

concerning which he may testify or produce evidence, documentary or otherwise, before such court or officer, or any court or officer empowered to issue subpoena in that behalf, or in any such case or proceeding except a prosecution for perjury or false swearing in giving such testimony.

(3) In case of the failure or neglect of any corporation, or of any such officer, clerk, agent, employe or servant, to produce any such book, paper, tariff, contract, agreement, record, file or document, secondary evidence of the contents of any or either of the same may be given, and such secondary evidence shall be of the same force and effect as the original.

Since the immunity which attaches under (2) or 77.61 (12), Stats. 1969, is merely coextensive with a defendant's 5th amendment rights against self-incrimination, and since the 5th amendment privilege does not attach to the records of a corporation, defendants' claim of immunity has no merit. *State v. Alioto*, 64 W (2d) 354, 219 NW (2d) 585.

**885.27 Admission by member of corporation.** In actions or proceedings by or against a corporation, the admission of any member thereof who is not a party to the action or proceeding shall not be received as evidence against such corporation unless such admission was made concerning some transaction in which such member was the authorized agent of the corporation.

**885.285 Settlement and advance payment of claim for damages.** (1) No admission of liability shall be inferred from the following:

(a) A settlement with or any payment made to an injured person, or to another on behalf of any injured person, or any person entitled to recover damages on account of injury or death of such person; or

(b) A settlement with or any payment made to a person or on the person's behalf to another for injury to or destruction of property.

(2) Any settlement or payment under sub. (1) is not admissible in any legal action unless pleaded as a defense.

(3) Any settlement or advance payment under sub. (1) shall be credited against any final settlement or judgment between the parties. Upon motion to the court in the absence of the jury and on submission of proper proof prior to entry of judgment on a verdict, the court shall apply the provisions of s. 895.045 and then shall reduce the amount of the damages so determined by the amount of the payments made. Any rights of contribution between joint tortfeasors shall be determined on the amount of the verdict prior to reduction because of a settlement or advance payment.

(4) The period fixed for the limitation for the commencement of actions shall be as provided by s. 893.12.

History: 1975 c. 327, 421; 1979 c. 323.

**885.365 Recorded telephone conversation.** (1) Evidence obtained as the result of the use of voice recording equipment for recording of telephone conversations, by way of interception of a communication or in any other manner, shall be totally inadmissible in the courts of this state in civil actions, except as provided in ss. 968.28 to 968.33.

(2) Subsection (1) shall not apply where:

(a) Such recording is made in a manner other than by interception and the person whose conversation is being recorded is informed at that time that the conversation is being recorded and that any evidence thereby obtained may be used in a court of law; or such recording is made through a recorder connector provided by the telephone public utility in accordance with its tariffs and which automatically produces a distinctive recorder tone that is repeated at intervals of approximately 15 seconds;

(b) The recording is made by a telephone public utility as defined in s. 196.01 or its officers or employes for the purpose of or incident to the construction, maintenance, conduct or operation of the services and facilities of such public utilities, or to the normal use by such public utilities of the services and facilities furnished to the public by such public utility; or

(c) The recording is made by a fire department or law enforcement agency to determine violations of, and in the enforcement of, s. 941.13.

History: 1971 c. 40 s. 93; 1977 c. 173 s. 168.

**885.37 Interpreters for hearing-handicapped persons.** Upon a trial or examination in any matter wherein any deaf or hard of hearing person or any person unable to speak or who has a speech defect is accused of a crime or misdemeanor, or upon consideration by any state, county or municipal agency of the right or propriety of any such person to have privileges accorded normal hearing people, or when such person is to come under judgment as to fitness for a place in society, and there is a definite communications barrier as evidenced by such person being incapable of adequately understanding any charge, issue or pertinent utterances or expressing himself or herself because of a lack of ability to use the English language by reason of being deaf or hard of hearing, or by such person being unable to speak or who has a speech defect or other physical defect which handicaps such person in exercising or maintaining rights in such matter, the court, judge,

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agency, person or body conducting, considering or having jurisdiction of such trial, examination or matter shall call in and appoint an interpreter competent to converse in the special language, oral, manual or sign, familiar to or used by such deaf or hard of hearing person or such person unable to speak or who has a speech defect. The necessary expense of furnishing such interpreter shall be paid by the unit of government for which such trial, examination, inquiry or consideration is held or made if satisfactory proof is offered that the deaf or hard of hearing person, person unable to speak or who has a speech defect or other such person is unable to pay.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) 760; 1975 c. 106, 199

**VIDEOTAPE PROCEDURE**

**885.40 Applicability.** Sections 885.40 to 885.47 apply to all trial courts of record in this state in the receipt and utilization of testimony and other evidence recorded on videotape and to the review of cases on appeal where the record on appeal contains testimony or other evidence recorded on videotape. These sections are not intended to preclude or limit the presentation of evidence by other technical procedures.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xi.

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** The contents of these rules are not meant to exclude present practice whereby movies and photographs are introduced into evidence in appropriate situations. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

Legal applications of videotape. Benowitz, 1974 WBB No. 3

**885.41 Definitions. (1) VIDEOTAPING.** Videotaping is a visual or simultaneous audio-visual electronic recording.

**(2) OPERATOR.** Operator means a person trained to operate video equipment and may be an official qualified under s. 804.03.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xii.

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** The definition of videotaping recognizes that videotaping can be used for visual purposes with no audio recording present. The definition of operator recognizes that an operator of videotape equipment could be the same individual before whom depositions can presently be taken as authorized by s. 804.03. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

**885.42 When available. (1) DEPOSITIONS.** Any deposition may be recorded by audio-visual videotape without a stenographic transcript. Any party to the action may arrange at the party's expense to have a simultaneous stenographic record made. Except as provided by ss. 885.40 to 885.47, ch. 804 governing the practice and procedure in depositions and discovery shall apply.

**(2) OTHER EVIDENCE.** Such other evidence as is appropriate may be recorded by videotape and be presented at a trial.

**(3) ENTIRE TRIAL TESTIMONY AND EVIDENCE.** All trial proceedings, including evidence

in its entirety, may be presented at a trial by videotape upon the approval of all parties and the trial judge. In determining whether to approve a videotape trial, the trial judge, after consultation with counsel, shall consider the cost involved, the nature of the action, and the nature and amount of testimony. The trial judge shall fix a date prior to the date of trial when all recorded testimony must be filed with the clerk of court.

**(4) TRIAL RECORD.** At trial, videotape depositions and other testimony presented by videotape shall be reported.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xii; 1975 c. 218.

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** Sub. (1) The definition of depositions is meant to include adverse examinations prior to trial.

Sub. (2) This subsection anticipates that certain other evidence, such as the scene of an accident or the lifestyle of an accident victim, may be presented at trial by means of videotape. This provision would also allow the majority of a trial to be conducted by means of videotape.

Sub. (3) This subsection would authorize an entire videotape trial in Wisconsin. Such a trial could only occur upon the approval of all parties and the presiding judge. Appropriate safeguards are included to ensure that this provision would be used only when clearly appropriate. Procedure for a videotape trial is subject to agreement among the parties and the court.

Sub. (4) This subsection establishes that matters presented by videotape at trial are made a part of the trial record in anticipation of a possible appeal. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

**885.43 Notice of videotape deposition.**

Every notice for the taking of a videotape deposition and subpoena for attendance at such deposition shall state that the deposition is to be visually recorded, filed and preserved pursuant to the provisions of ss. 885.44 and 885.46.

**History:** Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xii

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** This provision recognizes that there should be adequate notice that a deposition by videotape is to be taken. The section requires that the notice make reference to the provisions on filing and preserving of videotape depositions. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

**885.44 Videotape deposition procedure.**

**(1) OFFICIAL.** Videotape depositions may be taken by persons authorized by s. 804.03. Upon the request of a party, the official shall provide, at the cost of the party, a copy of a deposition in the form of a videotape, a written transcript, or an audio recording.

**(2) REQUIRED INFORMATION.** The deposition shall begin by the operator stating on camera:

(a) The operator's name and business address;

(b) The name and business address of the operator's employer;

(c) The date, time and place of the deposition;

(d) The caption of the case;

(e) The name of the witness; and

(f) The party on whose behalf the deposition is being taken. Counsel shall identify themselves on camera. The person before whom the deposition is taken shall then identify himself or herself and swear or affirm the witness on camera. At the conclusion of the deposition the operator shall state on camera that the deposition is concluded. When the length of the deposition requires the use of more than one tape, the end of each tape and the beginning of each succeeding tape shall be announced on camera by the operator.

(3) CAMERA. More than one camera may be used, either in sequence or simultaneously.

(4) TIMING OF DEPOSITION. The deposition shall be timed by a date-time generator which shall show continually each hour, minute and second of each tape of the deposition.

(5) OBJECTIONS. Objections may be made only at the conclusion of an answer to a question. Counsel may state the basis for the objections and read citations into the record at this time. Any objections made prior to the completion of an answer may in the court's discretion be overruled.

(6) SUBMISSION TO WITNESS. After a videotape deposition is taken, submission of the videotape to the witness for examination is deemed waived unless such submission is requested by the witness.

(7) CERTIFICATION OF ORIGINAL VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITION. The official before whom the videotape deposition is taken shall cause a written certification to be attached to the original videotape. The certification shall state that the witness was fully sworn or affirmed by the official and that the videotape is a true record of the testimony given by the witness. If the witness has not waived the right to a showing and examination of the videotape deposition, the witness shall also sign the certification. When an official makes a copy or a transcription of the videotape deposition in any medium, the official shall attach a written certification to the copy or transcription. The certification shall state that the copy is a true record of the videotape testimony of the witness.

(8) CERTIFICATION OF EDITED VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITION. The official who edits an original videotape deposition shall attach a written certification to the edited copy of the videotape deposition. The certification shall state that the editing complies with the rulings of the court and that the original videotape deposition has not been affected by the editing process.

(9) FILING AND MOTIONS ON OBJECTIONS. The official shall file the deposition with the clerk of court. Motions for ruling upon objections shall be made with the court within 30 days

of filing the deposition or within a reasonable time stipulated by the parties.

(10) NOTICE OF FILING OF VIDEOTAPE DEPOSITIONS. Notice of the filing of videotape depositions shall be given pursuant to s. 804.05 (7) (a) unless waived.

(11) RULING ON OBJECTIONS. In ruling on objections the court may view the entire videotape or pertinent parts thereof, listen to an audiotape of the videotape sound track, or direct the objecting party to file a partial transcript. The court shall make written rulings on objections and an order for editing. Copies of the court's rulings and order for editing shall be sent to the parties and the objecting witness.

(12) EDITING ALTERNATIVES. The original videotape shall not be affected by any editing process. In its order for editing the court may: (a) release the videotape to the official with instructions to keep the original videotape intact and make an edited copy of the videotape which deletes all references to objections and objectionable material; (b) order the person showing the original videotape at trial to suppress the objectionable audio portions of the videotape; or (c) order the person showing the original videotape at trial to suppress the objectionable audio and video portions of the videotape. If the court uses alternative (a), the official shall cause both the original videotape recording and the edited videotape recording, each clearly identified, to be filed with the clerk of court. If the court uses alternative (b), it shall, in jury trials, instruct the jury to disregard the video portions of the presentation when the audio portion is suppressed. If the court uses alternative (c), it shall, in jury trials, instruct the jury to disregard any deletions apparent in the playing of the videotape.

(13) INSPECTION OR VIEWING. Except upon order of the court and upon such terms as it may provide, the videotape recordings on file with the clerk of the court shall not be available for inspection, viewing, or copying after filing and prior to use at trial or disposition in accordance with these rules.

(14) OBJECTIONS AT TRIAL. Objections made at trial which have not been waived or previously raised and ruled upon shall be made before the videotape deposition is presented. The trial judge shall rule on such objections prior to the presentation of the videotape. If an objection is sustained, that portion of the videotape containing the objectionable testimony shall be deleted in the manner provided in sub. (12).

History: Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xiii; 1975 c. 218. Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975: Subs. (2) through (5) set out the mechanical procedures for the taking of a videotape deposition. These procedures are included to ensure uniformity throughout Wisconsin. In addition, they

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ensure proper identification of the contents of a videotape deposition and protect against tampering. Sub (5) is not intended to affect the provisions in other statutes on objections but is included as part of videotape deposition procedure to facilitate possible editing. It is based on a similar Ohio rule.

Sub (6) contemplates that, as with regular depositions, the large majority of witnesses at a videotape deposition do not desire to review the deposition upon its completion.

Subs. (7) and (8) set out the procedure for certification of a videotape deposition. Certification by the official taking the deposition must also be made of a copy or audio recording of a videotape deposition and of an edited version of a deposition.

Sub (9) allows for an expansion of time for motions on videotape objections if the parties stipulate to the additional time.

Sub (11) requires that any editing of a videotape deposition required by a court ruling favorably on an objection can only be done by a court order. It also requires that the parties and the objecting witness receive copies of both the court's ruling on objections and order for editing.

Sub. (12) sets out the alternatives that the court may use in ordering editing of a videotape deposition. It is included to facilitate the most expeditious and least expensive method of editing.

Sub. (13). Access to videotape recordings after filing is by court order and subject to terms prescribed by the court in order to protect the integrity of such recordings.

Sub (14). Objections to a videotape deposition not previously resolved that are made at trial must be made prior to the actual showing of the videotape at the trial. This procedure assures timely raising of objections. [Re Order effective Jan 1, 1976]

**885.45 Videotape costs; depositions and trials. (1)** The expense of videotape as a material shall be borne by the proponent.

**(2)** The reasonable expense of recording testimony on videotape shall be costs in the action.

**(3)** The expense of playing the videotape recording at trial shall be borne by the court.

**(4)** The expense of an audio reproduction of the videotape recording sound track used by the court in ruling on objections shall be costs in the action.

**(5)** The expense of playing the videotape recording for the purpose of ruling upon objections shall be borne by the court.

**(6)** The expense of producing the edited version of the videotape recording shall be costs in the action, provided that the expense of the videotape, as a material, shall be borne by the proponent of the testimony.

**(7)** The expense of a copy of the videotape recording and the expense of an audiotape recording of the videotape sound track shall be borne by the party requesting the copy.

*History:* Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xvi.

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** This provision sets out the application of costs in the use of videotape procedure. Costs are allocated in an equitable manner between the proponent and the court or are considered costs in the action. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

**885.46 Videotape custody. (1) OWNER-SHIP.** Videotape used in recording testimony shall remain the property of the proponent of the testimony.

**(2) RELEASE OF VIDEOTAPE RECORDINGS.**

**(a)** The court may authorize the clerk of court to release the original videotape recording and any edited videotape recording to the owner of the videotape upon:

1. The final disposition of the cause where no trial is had;

2. The expiration of the appeal period following trial, provided no appeal is taken;

3. The final determination of the cause if an appeal is taken.

**(b)** The order of release shall be filed with the clerk of court.

*History:* Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xvi.

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** Sub. (1). One of the advantages of videotape is its possible reuse in other legal proceedings but the proponent of any videotape testimony retains the responsibility for submitting a recording of sufficient quality.

Sub. (2). Release of videotape recordings may be done only by order of the court. Such release may only occur after completion of the proceeding for which the videotape has been used. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]

**885.47 Videotape playback equipment.**

**(1) STANDARD.** The "EIAJ Standard for One-Half Inch Videotape Recorders" is adopted as the judicial standard in this state for the recording of testimony and other evidence on videotape. If a party uses videotape equipment which is not compatible with the standard, the party shall furnish reproduction equipment or convert the videotape to the established standard at the party's expense. Such expense is not chargeable as costs.

**(2) PLAYBACK EQUIPMENT.** Each court may establish rules providing for the availability of playback or reproducing equipment. Such rules shall provide for an adequately trained operator. Minimum playback equipment shall be a videotape player and one monitor having at least a 14 inch diagonal screen. Color equipment is not required.

**(3) STORAGE.** The court shall direct secure and proper storage of videotape recordings.

*History:* Sup. Ct. Order, 67 W (2d) xvii; 1975 c. 218

**Judicial Council Committee's Note, 1975:** Sub (1). The standard adopted in Wisconsin assures eventual compatibility of videotape equipment throughout the state and will aid in avoiding unnecessary expenses in converting recorded material to equipment meeting the standard. The same standard is being adopted in those jurisdictions presently establishing videotape procedures for judicial proceedings.

Sub (2). Each court in Wisconsin is encouraged to establish rules for making available videotape playback or reproducing equipment. Such availability could be secured through purchase, leasing, rental, or borrowing from another court. Each court establishing such rules must provide for a trained videotape operator.

Sub (3). Each trial court in Wisconsin must make facilities available for the storing of videotape recordings. Extraordinary storage methods are not normally necessary. Storage that exposes videotape to strong magnetic fields must be avoided. [Re Order effective Jan. 1, 1976]