Digital

signATURES

Quick Reference for Form Users

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# Introduction

Digital signature is the umbrella term used to talk about secure signature or simple signature and the term also includes offline and online signatures. In its most basic format, a “picture” is intended to make both the signer and recipient of a signed document “feel” like the ritual they are undergoing is equivalent to that of the traditional paper process. Digital Signatures can also be encrypted and secured using Public Key Infrastructure (PKI), also known as myKEY.

This document will provide a brief overview of what you need to know start signing documents using a digital signature. The following related guidance may also be used as an additional reference:

* RDIMS-#15397429-SI - EA - DIGITAL SIGNATURES - TECHNICAL USER GUIDE (ENGLISH)
* RDIMS-#15398723- SI-EA - DIGITAL SIGNATURES - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (ENGLISH)

# Can I Use Digital Signature?

June 2019 amendments to the Canadian Transportation Act allow the Minister of Transport to establish electronic equivalencies to every process regulated under the Act. Processes that require wet signatures under the Act are also now eligible for digital signatures. This includes internal processes and forms such as financial and human resources forms, letters of offer, and request forms provided to the TC Service Desk. As a result of this, we are making it easier for documents to be approved and signed electronically by making forms digital and streamlining every day processes. This is an important step in the move to a digital-first, modern and inclusive workplace.

# Benefits of Digital signature

In the past there have been some users who have had a preference for traditional written “wet ink” signatures, and some business preferences continue to reinforce a paper based bias. However, with the introduction of digital signature technology, the process of submitting documentation has changed significantly and many forms are now being signed safely and efficiently using digital signature. Some of the popular benefits of digital signature include increased speed, reduced cost, improved security, better authenticity and can also offer a time-stamp to indicate exactly when a document was signed.

# Types of Digital Signature

The type of signature that is required is directly linked to the type of document you are signing and its associated risk level. As some types of signatures are more secure than others you’ll need to choose a signature that meets the security requirement of the document and/or process and instruct your users appropriately.

There are several different types and uses for digital signature. To start with, digital signatures can be online or offline:

* Offline signatures: Defined as signatures in documents such as Word or PDFs that are shared via emails or other mechanisms
* Online signatures: Used or developed in solutions and can take the form of checkboxes or buttons, in combination with the capture of appropriate metadata.
* Secure signature: Signatures applied to a document using a personal certificate and is coupled to an identity that has been proven to a higher level of assurance.
* Simple signature**:** A stylus captured, typed or image based signature that is applied to a document with little or no identity validation. This is the most basic type of signature and is appropriate for low risk transactions and in some cases, will need to be coupled with an offline identity verification.

# Appropriate Software to Use

It will be necessary to determine the appropriate type of software you will be using to create and sign the form using a Digital Signature, The following solutions are currently permitted at TC and their corresponding user instructions are described in Appendix B:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Software | Use to Create Digital Signature Forms | Use to Sign Digital Signature Forms | Notes |
| Adobe Reader | Yes | Yes |  |
| Microsoft Office | Yes | Yes |  |
| Foxit PhantomPDF | Yes | Yes |  |

# Recommended Steps

If you are the functional owner of a document, a form or a process, it may be beneficial to rethink its design from start to finish. We recommend the following steps:

* Determine if you can use Digital Signature
* Determine what type of Digital Signature to use
* Challenge signatures in situations where other actions an individual takes could fulfill the requirement of acceptance of its content.
* Determine the type of software you will be using to create and sign the form
* Determine the type of digital signature to use
* Report Success and Lessons Learned

# Conclusion

Digital Signatures are a great way to save time and gain efficiencies in your process as well as reducing the use of paper and printers. Not all processes and documents lend themselves well to digital signatures, but if they do, the standard Transport Canada tools technology offers different types of digital signatures that allows you to do so quickly and easily. We recommend reviewing the related guidance in Appendix B and follow our GC Wiki page ([TC Digital Signature Pilots](https://wiki.gccollab.ca/Transport_Canada_Digital_Signature_Pilots_-_Pilotes_de_signatures_num%C3%A9rique_%C3%A0_Transports_Canada)) to get started with digital signatures today!