

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF  
INDIANA

**BWXT Nuclear Operations Group, Inc. v. J & L Hatfield, LLC,  
Jeffrey Hatfield, Lois Ann Hatfield**

BWXT v. Hatfield · No. 1:24-cv-01054-SEB-KMB · Decided December 29, 2025

SUMMARY

This Report and Recommendation addresses BWXT Nuclear Operations Group, Inc.'s renewed motion for sanctions based on the defendants' failure to comply with discovery obligations and prior court orders. The magistrate judge recommends entering default judgment against J & L Hatfield, LLC, providing Jeffrey Hatfield and Lois Ann Hatfield one final opportunity to complete discovery, and imposing monetary sanctions and attorney-fee awards.

CASE DETAILS

|                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| COURT                 | United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| WRITING FOR THE COURT | Bobbie Pann                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| JURISDICTION          | United States District Court for the Southern District of Indiana                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| DECIDED               | December 29, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| DOCKET                | 1:24-cv-01054-SEB-KMB                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| DISPOSITION           | other                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| PROCEDURAL POSTURE    | Report and recommendation on Plaintiff's renewed motion for sanctions under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 37, referred by the district judge under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B).                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| STANDARD OF REVIEW    | Under Rule 37, sanctions for failure to obey discovery orders must be proportionate to the disobedient party's conduct. Default judgment requires a clear record of delay or contumacious conduct, or willfulness, bad faith, or fault, and the court considers the party's conduct during discovery as a whole and whether lesser sanctions would be ineffective. |
| PRECEDENTIAL VALUE    | nonprecedential                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| PARTIES               | BWXT Nuclear Operations Group, Inc. v. J & L Hatfield, LLC, Jeffrey Hatfield, Lois Ann Hatfield                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

## TOPICS

sanctions

discovery dispute

default judgment

attorney fees

civil procedure

## PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

discovery sanctions

commercial litigation

contracts

remedies

## QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether J & L Hatfield, LLC should receive default judgment as a Rule 37 sanction for failing to obtain counsel and failing to comply with discovery orders.
2. Whether Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield should receive default judgment or other adverse sanctions for their late and inadequate discovery responses.
3. Whether monetary sanctions, including attorney fees, costs, and \$1,800 in progressive sanctions, should be imposed for the discovery failures.
4. What additional discovery and compliance measures should be ordered for Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield.

## HOLDINGS

1. J & L Hatfield, LLC may not litigate pro se and may not be represented by Jeffrey or Lois Hatfield because an LLC must appear through licensed counsel.
2. Default judgment should be entered against J & L as a sanction because it failed to comply with the First Sanctions Order and failed to obtain counsel despite repeated warnings and a reasonable opportunity to do so.
3. Default judgment, adverse factual findings, and a prohibition against opposing BWXT's fraud claim should not be recommended against Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield at this time because they made a belated but substantive attempt to comply and paid previously ordered attorney fees.
4. Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield should each be sanctioned \$600, for a total of \$1,800 payable to BWXT, and should pay BWXT's reasonable attorney fees and costs associated with the renewed sanctions motion.

## KEY QUOTATIONS

*“The usual course when a litigant not entitled to litigate pro se loses its lawyer in the midst of the case is to give it a reasonable opportunity to find a new one . . . and if it fails . . . [to] enter a default judgment.”* (at 8)

*“These examples show that many of Mr. and Ms. Hatfield’s responses to the Requests for Production are woefully inadequate.”* (at 12)

*“Default judgment is strong medicine for discovery abuse.”* (at 13)

## FACTUAL BACKGROUND

BWXT contracted with J & L Hatfield, LLC to rebuild and return a rotary table. Defendants repeatedly represented that the table was ready or nearly ready but did not deliver it or permit the ordered inspection. After an earlier sanctions order required discovery responses and inspection, Defendants missed the deadline,

submitted incomplete responses, and J & L still had no counsel. Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield paid previously ordered attorney fees and made a belated attempt to respond to discovery.

## PROCEDURAL HISTORY

BWXT brought a diversity action arising from Defendants' alleged failure to return a rebuilt rotary table and failure to participate adequately in discovery. The magistrate judge previously recommended sanctions and discovery deadlines, which the district judge adopted; Defendants' counsel then withdrew, leaving Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield proceeding pro se while J & L remained unrepresented. After Defendants failed to meet the discovery deadline and submitted incomplete responses, BWXT renewed its sanctions motion. This report recommends granting the motion in part and denying it in part, subject to review by the district judge.

## DISPOSITION

other

## REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The report recommends that the district judge enter default judgment against J & L; require BWXT to serve specified renewed discovery requests on Jeffrey and Lois Hatfield; require them to provide complete responses within 21 days; require them to produce current photographs and video of the rotary table within 14 days; impose \$1,800 in progressive sanctions; and require payment of BWXT's fees and costs associated with the renewed sanctions motion. The recommendations remain subject to the district judge's action and any timely objections under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1) and Rule 72(b).

## CASES CITED

- Brown v. Columbia Sussex Corp., 664 F.3d 182, 190 (7th Cir. 2011)
- Domanus v. Lewicki, 742 F.3d 290, 301 (7th Cir. 2014)
- Ramirez v. T&H Lemont, Incorporated, 845 F.3d 772, 779-80 (7th Cir. 2016)
- Nelson v. Schlutz, 878 F.3d 236, 238-39 (7th Cir. 2017)
- 1756 W. Lake Street LLC v. Am. Chartered Bank, 787 F.3d 383, 385 (7th Cir. 2015)
- United States v. Hagerman, 545 F.3d 579, 581 (7th Cir. 2008)
- United States v. Hagerman, 549 F.3d 538
- Trade Well Int'l v. United Central Bank, 825 F.3d 854, 860 (7th Cir. 2016)
- e360 Insight, Inc. v. Spamhaus Project, 658 F.3d 637, 643 (7th Cir. 2011)
- McInnis v. Duncan, 697 F.3d 661, 665 (7th Cir. 2012)

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