



## Temporary Records

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Dear Reader:

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We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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## Temporary Records

**Reference Number:** MTAS-474

If a record must be kept for some reason after its initial use, then it is at least a temporary record. Temporary records are officially defined as "... material which can be disposed of in a short period of time as being without value in documenting the functions of an agency." [1] Financial and payroll records are good examples. Payroll records have fulfilled their immediate purpose once your employees receive their checks. But those records must be kept in order to comply with federal statutes and regulations and are important documents in the case of an audit. [2] Once a temporary record has been retained for the period described in the schedule, then, like a working paper, it may be destroyed in accordance with the rules and regulations adopted by the city's governing body or municipal public records commission. These rules should require approval of the city archivist (if there is one), city attorney, city recorder, city manager (if there is one), head of the department and mayor before the records are destroyed.

**Alternative Formats for Temporary Records** Generally speaking, if you are keeping a record for only five years or less, it is not cost efficient to microfilm the original paper records or convert them to other media. But certain records that are "temporary" actually have a rather lengthy retention period. Many court records must be kept 10 years, and employee earning records that may be used for computing retirement benefits are kept for the approximate life of the employee.

Even though these records do not have to be kept permanently, you may find it useful to convert them to other, more compact formats for storage and destroy the paper originals shortly after the alternative format is created. Microfilming or electronic storage of these long-term temporary records can be ideal solutions to storage space problems. The governing body or municipal public records commission should adopt a policy requiring approval prior to the destruction of original paper documents. It is not necessary to notify Library and Archives of the destruction of original copies of records of temporary value.

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[1] T.C.A. §10-7-301

[2] See the following discussion entitled Special Consideration for more information about audit records.

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*DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.*

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