



Municipal Technical Advisory Service
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Microfilm

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the Municipal Technical Advisory Services website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website shares information relative to Tennessee municipal government. We hope this information will be useful to you and that it will assist you with questions that arise in your tenure in 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.

The Municipal Technical Advisory Service (MTAS) was created in 1949 to provide technical assistance to elected and appointed municipal officials in Tennessee. We are a resource for Tennessee municipal officials in areas of municipal government, human resources, finance, fire, legal, police, public works, water, and wastewater. We provide personal and professional knowledge growth opportunities on current issues within municipal government.

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Table of Contents

Microfilm	3
State Microfilming Program	3
Technical Guidelines	3

Microfilm

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Reviewed Date: 11/30/2022

MICROFILM ^[1]

Microfilming can offer as much as a 98 percent reduction in storage space over storing records in their original paper format. ^[2] And by having a back-up copy of microfilm stored off site, a government can almost immediately recover from any disaster or occurrence that damages its vital records. Produced correctly, microfilm is considered to be archival quality, meaning it is a suitable format for storing permanent retention documents.

But microfilm has disadvantages. No alternative format is going to be a perfect solution for all your records management problems. Microfilming is not cheap. It is a labor-intensive process that requires expertise of the person doing the work. Additionally, if microfilm is not properly produced, developed and stored, it will not stand the test of time.

^[1] In this text, the terms “microfilm” and “microfilming” are used generally to discuss the various micro-photographic processes available.

^[2] Using Microfilming, p.1.

State Microfilming Program

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The law provides that the State Library and Archives is charged with providing trained staff and appropriate equipment necessary to produce and store microfilm reproductions of official, permanent value bound volume records created by county and municipal governments.

To implement this security microfilming program, the state librarian and archivist are authorized to develop a priority listing of essential records based on retention schedules developed by the UT County Technical Assistance Service and the UT Municipal Technical Advisory Service. This priority listing of essential records may be revised from time to time to accommodate critical needs in individual counties or municipalities or to reflect changes in retention schedules. The camera negative of the microfilmed records shall be stored in the security vault at the State Library and Archives, and duplicate rolls of these microfilmed records shall be made available to county and municipal governments on a cost basis. ^[1]

^[1] T.C.A. § 10-7-511.

Technical Guidelines

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The following guidelines for producing and storing microfilm are considered crucial by the

Tennessee State Library and Archives:

- **Microfilm must conform to national archival processing and storage standards if it is to survive:** Tennessee law requires that "photographic film shall comply with the minimum standards of quality approved for permanent photographic records by the National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology), and the device used to reproduce such records on film shall be one which accurately reproduces the original thereof in all details. ^[1]

Information about microfilming loose records can be viewed at Loose records are documents that are not in bound record books (tnsosfiles.com)

For general information about the Archives Development Program, including how to schedule a visit to your community, please contact adp.tsla@tn.gov. Tennessee Archives Management Advisories (TAMAs) can be viewed at: Tennessee Archives Management Advisories (TAMAs) | Tennessee Secretary of State (tn.gov)

^[1] T.C.A. § 10-7-501.

Source URL: <https://www.mtas.tennessee.edu/reference/microfilm>