



County Technical Assistance Service

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Records and Computers

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS electronic library known as e-Li. This online library is maintained daily by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

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 county 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 e-Li material.

Sincerely,

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Table of Contents

Records and Computers	3
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Records and Computers

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Reflecting the more modern systems of maintaining records, T.C.A. § 10-7-202(b) provides for the option of maintaining indexes on a computer. Furthermore, T.C.A. § 10-7-121 authorizes all government officials, including registers, to keep any information required to be kept as a record on a computer or removable storage media, including any appropriate electronic medium, instead of bound books or paper records if the following standards are met:

1. Such information is available for public inspection, unless it is a confidential record according to law;
2. Due care is taken to maintain any information that is a public record during the time required by law for retention;
3. All daily data generated and stored within the computer system must be copied to computer storage media daily, and the newly created computer storage media more than one week old must be stored at a location other than at the building where the original is maintained; and
4. The official can provide a paper copy of the information when needed or when requested by a member of the public.

A new procedure is available for the destruction of original public records which have been reproduced onto computer storage media, including any appropriate electronic medium. These reproductions are required to be done according to regulations promulgated by the Secretary of State regarding approved technology, standards and procedures. Once original permanent records are reproduced properly, they may be destroyed or transferred to a suitable institution upon the approval of the county public records commission. It is important to remember that original public records may not be destroyed without the approval of the county public records commission and after the statutory and regulatory rules have been followed. T.C.A. § 10-7-404.

Registers and other county officials are authorized to provide remote electronic access for viewing of records of the office which are maintained on computer storage media during regular business hours. Registers are authorized to charge users of information through remote access a reasonable amount sufficient to recover the costs of providing this service, and may not charge any more for this service. This charge may not include the cost of storage and maintenance of the records or the cost of the electronic record storage system. Registers may not charge a fee for viewing records in the office, electronically or otherwise. A remote viewing system must not allow the alteration or impairment of the records by the remote viewer. Registers who provide remote electronic access for viewing records must file a statement with the Comptroller of the Treasury describing the computer equipment, software and procedures thirty (30) days prior to offering this service. This statement must describe how the remote access system will prevent remote users from altering the records. Once a remote information system is in place, all members of the public who are willing to pay the user fee must be given access to the system. T.C.A. § 10-7-123.

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