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Filing Systems

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained 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 CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Filing Systems

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After you have evaluated the inventory of the records your office keeps, spend some time evaluating your filing system as well. If improvements can be made to the way you file records, you will improve administrative efficiency in your office and reduce costs. "If every employee of an agency of local governments spends even 5 percent of the time searching for hard-to-find information, that time translates into very substantial sums of money, and quality of services is sure to suffer."[1] A good filing system will provide two major benefits to the people using it: *precise* retrieval and *timely* retrieval.[2] Another way of thinking about these issues is to ask "Can I find *what* I want *when* I want it?" If your filing system results in records retrieval that takes too long, that only gives you part of what you want, or gives you back much more than you needed, it is inefficient. Poor filing system performance is generally attributed to seven major factors.

1. Inadequate management attention;
2. Poor organization and structure of files;
3. Poor labeling and indexing procedures;
4. Uncontrolled growth of records;
5. A high incidence of missing, misfiled, or lost records;[3]
6. Inadequate and/or poorly trained files personnel; and
7. Inadequate or no formal record-keeping procedures.[4]

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[1] *The Daily Management of Records and Information* A Guide for Local Governments, issued by the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, p. 1.

[2] The Daily Management of Records and Information, p. 2.

[3] "Studies show that between 1 and 3 percent of an organization's records are not available to the users due to one of these causes." The Daily Management of Records and Information p. 3.

[4] The Daily Management of Records and Information, pp. 2 and 3.

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