



March 13, 2025

Technical Guidelines

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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Technical Guidelines

Reference Number: CTAS-1201

The following guidelines for producing and storing microfilm are considered crucial by the Tennessee State Library and Archives.^[1] For more information on microfilming, contact 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 NIST] and the device used to reproduce such records on film shall be one which accurately reproduces the original thereof in all details."^[2]

- Good preparation of records to be filmed is crucial to success.

If they need it, you should clean and flatten the records before filming. You must film the records in their correct order and arrangement. At the beginning of each group, series, and sub-series, identify the records by filming descriptive "targets" that also include notes on physical condition and arrangement of the records.
- All records in a group or series, regardless of condition, must be filmed in proper orientation, order and focus.

If a page is omitted or improperly filmed and the original destroyed after filming, there is no way to recover the permanent record that should have been preserved.
- Archival quality silver-gelatin film must be used for the camera-image negative film, and it must be processed according to archival standards.

Diazo film and other inexpensive process films will not endure. Residual chemicals on film from poor processing will destroy film.

However, reference copies may be on any sort of commercial film that is convenient and affordable. It will have to be replaced from time to time, since heavy use in readers will wear out the film.
- The original negative (camera-image) film must be reserved in archival storage conditions and should be kept in a site removed from the main archives.

Only positive copies of the original negative should be used for reference, otherwise the original may be destroyed. High humidity and changes in temperature that are wide or frequent tend to hasten the destruction of film.

The original negative (camera image) film must be used only to produce reference copies as needed. Indeed, it is still better to have a second negative copy, from which to produce reference-use positives, so that the camera-image negative original is itself preserved.

Off-site storage, under archival conditions offers the best chance for survival of the original negative film. The Tennessee State Library and Archives is a good storage option for counties and municipalities that wish to preserve their original camera-image, negative film.

^[1] Tennessee Archives Management Advisory 99-005, Microfilming Permanent Records, January 11, 1999.

^[2] T.C.A. § 10-7-501.

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