

Fire Departments



Functional Analysis & Records Disposition Authority

**Presented to the
Local Government
Records Commission
October 21, 2015**

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Functional and Organizational Analysis of Fire Departments

Sources of Information

ADAH Government Records Division, Functional Analysis and Agency Records Retention for Municipalities, 2015

Code of Alabama 1975

Representatives of Local Fire Departments and Fire Districts

Representatives of the Alabama Forestry Commission

Websites of the U.S. Fire Administration, National Fire Protection Association, Alabama Association of Volunteer Fire Departments, Alabama Forestry Commission, Alabama Fire College, Local Fire Departments, New York City Fire Department, and Boston Fire Historical Society

Wikipedia Articles on the History of Firefighting, Firefighting in the United States, Fire Department, Volunteer Fire Department, Fire, Great Fire of London, and List of Fires

Historical Context

Circa 24 BCE, the Roman Emperor Augustus created the earliest known public fire department. In America, a major fire in Boston, Massachusetts, in the 1630s, spurred the first legislation related to fire prevention - banning smoking outdoors. Other major conflagrations led the city to establish America's first publicly funded fire department in 1679. During this time, America's cities mostly established private fire brigades with volunteer firefighters. Private insurance companies often paid these private brigades to save buildings. Between 1800 and 1900, many American cities such as Chicago and San Francisco suffered devastating fires. Meanwhile, places such as New York City needed a professionalized system to accommodate the city's continued growth and to eliminate competition among rival volunteer companies. In 1865, the New York State Legislature passed an act creating the Metropolitan Fire Department and establishing firefighters as full-time public employees.

In urban centers, such as Mobile, Alabama, fire departments arose from social organizations in the communities, run by volunteers, such as the first volunteer fire department in Alabama - Creole Steam Fire Company No. 1 in 1819. Mobile's city government, like many others nationwide, also elected fire wardens for city districts to supervise fire prevention and fighting in residential neighborhoods. Since 1839, Mobile has held an annual parade to celebrate the service of city firefighters, volunteer and professional. Professionalization efforts also stemmed from conflicts that often arose within cities between elected officials and volunteer firefighting companies over compensation and support for injured volunteers. These disputes, such as one that happened in Mobile in 1888, often led to tense moments when volunteer units threatened to stop responding to fires if their demands remained unsatisfied. The 1888 Mobile incident led to the creation of a professional fire department that same year. Other urban areas in Alabama such as Birmingham established a paid fire department in the 1870s, with Montgomery funding a paid department in 1898.

Technological innovations also spurred improvement in firefighting efforts. The introduction of the steam engine during the 1800s eliminated the need for men to pump water, and the use of horses ended the problem of hauling engines by hand. In the 1920s, companies started to adopt motorization. With increased specialization, firefighting also became more proactive and the use of fire codes more common and strict, especially after many preventable fires occurred in the first half of the 20th century. Firefighters' roles have also broadened, as they now often cross-train as medical first responders to stabilize victims, to handle hazardous materials, and to serve on rescue operation teams. In Alabama, the state's diverse geographic features require firefighters to adopt numerous methods of operation. Those in south Alabama must deal with heat, high humidity, and the effects of using personnel and equipment in and near salt water, poisonous snakes and alligators. North Alabama has mountainous terrain, with steep cliffs requiring high-angle rescue operations.

Despite professional trends in major cities, rural areas continue to rely on trained volunteers. Of the 30,053 fire departments nationwide in 2013, 66 percent of those departments consisted strictly of volunteers. Those volunteers comprised 69 percent of the total 1,140,750 firefighters in the United States. For 2011, 1,389,500 reported fires nationwide resulted in 3,005 deaths and \$11.7 billion in property loss. Of those fires, while 29 percent were residential fires and 13 percent were vehicle fires, 44 percent of fires were outside. As of January 2015, Alabama had 89 percent volunteer and 11 percent career departments of the 799 fire departments registered with the National Fire Department Census, which lists U.S. fire departments registered with the U.S. Fire Administration, an entity of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The numbers are even higher, as the Alabama Forestry Commission has certified more than 1,000 volunteer fire departments as of 2015. Agencies such as the Alabama Forestry Commission provide assistance to volunteer fire departments, including certification, so that these groups can provide rapid response to the more than 1,800 reported wildfires that burned more than 29,000 acres in Alabama in 2014.

Agency Organization

A fire department or fire service is a public or private organization that provides predominantly emergency firefighting and rescue services for a certain jurisdiction, which is typically a municipality, county, or fire protection district. A fire department usually contains one or more fire stations within its boundaries, and may be staffed by career firefighters, volunteer firefighters, or a combination thereof.

Fire districts service unincorporated communities. Their funding is derived from fire dues authorized by statute. Fire Districts are overseen by a board of directors.

A volunteer fire department may be financially supported by taxes raised in a city, town, county, fire district, or other governmental entity, as well as corporate and other private donations, federal grants, and other assistance from auxiliary members, or firefighters' associations. In the United States, the Department of Labor, as stated in a Wage and Hour Opinion Letter FLSA2005-51, classifies volunteer firefighters as receiving no compensation or nominal fees up to 20% of the compensation a full-time firefighter would receive in the same capacity. The Code

of Alabama 1975, Section 9-3-17, identifies a volunteer fire department as having no less than 80 percent unsalaried membership.

Fire Departments Function and Subfunctions

The Public Services function of Alabama local government for fire departments encompasses all objectives that pertain to protecting life, health, property, and the environment through direct involvement in fire prevention, firefighting, emergency medical care, water rescue, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, code enforcement, disaster response, public education, and community service. In performing their mandated function, fire departments engage in the following subfunctions:

Making and Implementing Policy. Fire Districts are overseen by a board of directors. Other fire departments are governed by their associated governing body.

Providing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service. Section 11-43-140 of the Code of Alabama 1975, authorizes fire protection services, although there is no positive duty to provide them. Firefighters must be trained at local expense, as mandated by Code Sections 36-32-1 through 36-32-12. Under Sections 22-18-20 through 22-18-44, the Alabama Emergency Medical Services Commission sets standards and procedures for all local emergency medical services, which are also subject to federal regulation. Municipal fire departments, fire districts, and private EMS providers are licensed by the state's Department of Public Health. Some municipalities operate consolidated 911 dispatch units for responding to police, fire, and emergency medical service calls. The Alabama Forestry Commission handles certification for the volunteer fire departments.

Inspecting and Enforcing. As an essential safeguard of the public interest, inspection is a pervasive element of regulation. Under Sections 36-19-4 and 36-19-11, the local fire marshal is responsible for inspections to enforce the fire code. These responsibilities may include plan review and on-site inspections of new and existing structures on a routine and scheduled basis, and also upon complaint. Most public fire departments also carry out an enforcement role, to ensure that buildings are equipped with adequate fire precautions to limit the chances of fire and to ensure that in the event of fire, people can safely evacuate the premises unharmed. In addition, fire departments may be responsible for implementing local ordinances, which may include, but are not limited to, burn and fireworks permits and related regulations.

Investigating. Public fire departments investigate fire-related incidents within their jurisdiction and determine origin, cause, and responsibility of all fire and explosion incidents. Investigators then work with law enforcement to prosecute criminal acts involving fire, as outlined by the Code of Alabama 1975, Title 13, involving arson and criminal codes, especially related to Chapter 7, Article 3, Sections 13A-7-40 through 13A-7-44, dealing specifically with arson and explosives.

Providing Education and Outreach Services. A fire department may provide fire protection or fire prevention educational services to the public. Because fire stations are seen as community landmarks throughout Alabama, they often serve a wide array of outreach and educational roles in their community. Stations often offer routine training to citizens about the importance of installing smoke detectors in their homes; storage of flammable or toxic liquids in their homes; responding to common fires, such as grease and electrical, that occur in the home; and general fire prevention home safety advice. Stations also participate in community public safety fairs, often going to local schools or government buildings or festivals to educate citizens about their services and to generally maintain awareness of the dangers of fires and chemicals. Stations often serve as places where locals can stop by for guidance on properly installing their child car seats. Also, stations provide free CPR classes, as well as some basic first aid courses for area residents. Many stations test citizen blood pressure and/or serve as cooling off centers for area elderly during periods of extreme high temperatures.

Administering Internal Operations. A significant portion of fire department work includes general administrative, financial, and personnel activities performed to support the fire department's programmatic areas. These activities include:

Managing the agency. Activities include internal office management activities common to most government agencies, such as corresponding and communicating, scheduling; meeting; documenting policy and procedures; reporting; drafting, promoting, or tracking legislation; publicizing and providing information, managing records; and managing information systems technology.

Managing finances. Activities include budgeting (preparing and reviewing a budget package, submitting the budget package to the council, documenting amendments and performance of the budget, and reporting on established budget categories); purchasing (requisitioning and purchasing supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, accounting for expenditures, and authorizing payment for products received); accounting for the expenditure, encumbrance, disbursement, and reconciliation of funds within the agency's budget through a uniform system of accounting and reporting; authorizing travel; contracting with companies or individuals; bidding for products and services; assisting in the audit process; investing; and issuing bonds.

Managing human resources. Activities include recruiting and hiring eligible individuals to fill positions within the agency; providing compensation to employees; providing benefits such as leave, health insurance, unemployment compensation, worker's compensation, injury compensation, retirement, and death benefits; supervising employees by evaluating performance, promoting, granting leave, and monitoring the accumulation of leave; training and providing continuing education for employees; and disciplining.

Managing properties, facilities, and resources. Activities include: inventorying and accounting for non-consumable property and reporting property information to the appropriate authority; constructing buildings and facilities, leasing and/or renting offices or facilities; providing security for property owned by the agency; insuring property; and assigning, inspecting and maintaining agency property, including vehicles.

Analysis of Record-Keeping Systems and Records Appraisal of Fire Departments

Agency Record-Keeping Systems

Alabama's fire departments usually operate hybrid record-keeping systems composed of paper and electronic records.

Records Appraisal

The following is a discussion of permanent records maintained by Alabama Fire Departments.

I. Permanent Records. The Government Services Division recommends the following records as permanent:

Making and Implementing Policy

Administrative Correspondence of the Governing Body. This correspondence documents the formulation of policy or rule-making decisions by the board. It may reflect the influence of citizens on policy development; include statistics, technical information and reports of long-term administrative value; and document planning activities.

Minutes, Agendas, and Packets. The Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-25A-4, stipulates that accurate records of meetings should be maintained. Meeting minutes and related records are essential to document the evolution of policy and procedures. Under the provisions of the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-25A-2, work sessions of municipal councils, boards, commissions, and authorities are defined as open meetings.

Administrative Policies and Procedures. These records document policies and procedures established by the fire department on a variety of issues regarding its relations with the public, other governmental or private entities, and employees. They provide primary documentation of the government's philosophy and execution of mandated functions under the Code of Alabama and may have critical evidentiary value in case of litigation. Fire Department policies may be available to citizens in printed form

Providing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service

Fire Investigation Reports—reports of investigations that result in criminal charges. All records of fire investigations were formerly appraised as permanent because there is no statute of limitations on the crime of arson (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 15-3-5). However, not all fires are caused by arson. The proposed revision permits the destruction of records for cases in which no criminal charges were filed to be destroyed 10 years after the investigation was resolved.

Permanent Records List Fire Departments

Making and Implementing Policy:

1. Administrative Correspondence of the Governing Body
2. Minutes
3. Administrative Policies and Procedures

Investigating:

1. Fire Investigation Reports—reports of investigations that result in criminal charges

Administering Internal Operations - Managing the Agency:

1. Annual Reports
2. Historical and Publicity Files
3. Websites and Social Media Sites—Annual snapshots

Administering Internal Operations - Managing Finances

1. Approved Annual Budgets
2. Annual Financial Reports
3. Audit Reports
4. General Ledgers—general ledgers and detailed year-end trial balances created prior to 1975
5. Grant Project Final Narrative Reports

Administering Internal Operations - Managing Human Resources

1. Employee Handbooks
2. Employee Newsletters
3. Job Classification and Pay Plans
4. Annual Reports of Promotions and New Hires
5. Training Records—Training standards, policies, procedures, and publications

Administering Internal Operations - Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources

1. Building Construction and Renovation Files—plans, specifications, and blueprints

Fire Departments Records Disposition Authority

This records disposition authority (RDA) is issued by the Local Government Records Commission under authority granted by the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-13-5 and 41-13-22 through -24. It was compiled by the Government Services Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), which serves as the commission's staff, in cooperation with representatives of fire departments. The RDA lists records created and maintained by fire departments in carrying out their mandated function and subfunctions. It establishes retention periods and disposition instructions for those records and provides the legal authority for fire departments to implement records destruction.

Alabama law requires public officials to create and maintain records that document the business of their office. These records must be protected from "mutilation, loss, or destruction," so that they may be transferred to an official's successors in office and made available to members of the public. Records must also be kept in accordance with auditing standards approved by the Examiners of Public Accounts (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 36-12-2, 36-12-4, and 41-5-23). For assistance in implementing this RDA, or for advice on records disposition or other records management concerns, contact the ADAH Government Services Division at (334) 242-4452, or records@archives.alabama.gov.

Explanation of Records Requirements

This RDA supersedes any previous records disposition schedules or RDAs governing the retention of fire department records. Copies of superseded schedules, and RDAs are no longer valid and may not be used for records disposition.

This RDA establishes retention and disposition instructions for records of fire departments. It does not require the creation of any record not normally created in the conduct of fire department business, although the creation of certain records may be required by the fire department's administrative procedures, work responsibilities, audit requirements, or legislative mandates. Individual fire departments may not necessarily create all of the records listed below.

This RDA establishes retention and disposition instructions for records listed below, regardless of the medium on which those records may be kept. Electronic mail, for example, is a communications tool that may record permanent or temporary information. As for records in any other format, the retention periods for e-mail records are governed by the requirements of the subfunctions to which the records belong.

Certain other short-term records that do not materially document the work of an agency may be disposed of under this RDA. Such materials include: (1) duplicate record copies that do not require official action, so long as the creating office maintains the original record for the period required; and (2) transitory records, which are temporary records created for short-term, internal purposes and may include, but are not limited to: telephone call-back messages; drafts of ordinary documents not needed for their evidential value; copies of material sent for information purposes but not needed by the receiving office for future business; and internal communications

about social activities. They may be disposed of without documentation of destruction. Other items that may be disposed of without documentation of destruction include: (1) catalogs, trade journals, and other publications received that require no action and do not document activities; (2) stocks of blank stationery, blank forms, or other surplus printed materials that are not subject to audit and have become obsolete.

Any record created by the fire department prior to 1900 shall be regarded as permanent.

Records Disposition Requirements

This section of the RDA is arranged by subfunctions of fire departments and lists records created and/or maintained by fire departments in carrying out those subfunctions. Individual fire departments may submit requests to add or revise specific records disposition requirements to the Local Government Records Commission for consideration at its regular biannual meetings.

1. Making and Implementing Policy

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| 1.01 | Administrative Correspondence. This correspondence documents the formulation of policy or rule-making decisions by the board. | PERMANENT |
| 1.02 | Minutes, Agendas, and Packets. Fire Districts are overseen by a board of directors. This series documents the official minutes of the board, along with the agenda of topics to be discussed at the meeting and any attachments or other documents provided to commission members. (This material for Municipal Fire Departments is in City Council Packets.) | PERMANENT |
| 1.03 | Recordings of Meetings. Audio or video recordings provide a verbatim account of debate and public input at meetings. They are normally used only as an aid to preparation of the minutes. | Retain until minutes are approved. |
| 1.04 | Administrative Policies and Procedures. These records document policies and procedures established by the fire department on a variety of issues regarding its relations with the public, other governmental or private entities, and employees. Such policies may be available to citizens in printed form. | PERMANENT |

2. Providing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service

- 2.01 Fire/911 Department Dispatch Records.** These records document fire or emergency management departments' responses to calls for emergency or routine assistance. Information available in these records includes the time and date of the call, name and location of the caller, nature of the emergency, officers/vehicles assigned, and similar data.

Dispatch books, cards, or logs

Retain 3 years.

Audio/Video Recordings

Information that does not become part of a case file.

Retain 6 months.

Information that becomes part of a case file.

Retain until final disposition of all cases for which recording provides evidence.

- 2.02 Fire Department Run Reports.** Fire departments maintain a record of all trips when emergency vehicles are dispatched. The report consists of caller's name, address, and phone number; and date and time of call and may also include a service fee bill to the owner and directions to the address. The report may also include personnel involved, equipment used, and actions taken.

Retain 5 years.

- 2.03 Fire/Emergency Medical Service Patient Care Reports.** These records document each trip made by a fire department, or licensed EMS service provider, when medical care is provided during an emergency run. The report details the date, address, name of patient transported, any patient assessment or medical care rendered at the scene, and patient disposition (i.e., whether taken to hospital, doctor's office, home, or mortuary).

Retain 5 years.

- 2.04 Fire/Emergency Medical Service Department Reports, Certificates, and Operational Plans**

Fire/EMS daily/monthly reports

Retain 1 year.

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| Fire/EMS annual reports | Retain 2 years. |
| Fire damage reports | Retain 5 years. |
| Service licensure certificates and operational plans for EMS providers | Retain 5 years after certificate/plan is superseded. |
| <p>2.05 Emergency Medical Service Patient Collection Records. These records consist of invoices that document ambulance service provided and the amount of money due from patients, as well as computerized summaries of such information. Information on the invoice includes patient’s name, address, and phone number; date of service; list of services provided and amounts owed; and total balance due.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> For routine fire department/EMS operations records (accounting and purchasing records; grants, bids and service contracts; personnel and training records; work orders, operations logs, telephone/radio logs; maintenance data on equipment and facilities), follow the disposition statements for such records in the “Administering Internal Operations” subfunctions.</p> | Retain 2 years after audit. |
| <p>2.06 Fire Mutual Aid Plan. This series documents agreements among emergency responders to lend assistance across jurisdictional boundaries. This may occur due to an emergency response that exceeds local resources, such as a disaster or a multiple-alarm fire. It may be ad hoc when an emergency occurs or a formal standing agreement, such as ensuring that resources are dispatched from the nearest fire station.</p> | Retain 3 years after superseded or obsolete. |
| <p>2.07 Disaster and Emergency Management Plans. Records concerning preparedness, evacuations, and operations in the event of a disaster. Includes, but is not limited to, official copy of the emergency operations plan and all background surveys, studies, and reports.</p> | |
| If an element of the Emergency Operations Plan... | Retain for useful life. |
| If not an element of the Emergency Operations Plan... | Retain until superseded or obsolete. |

Background surveys, studies, reports, and drafts...

Retain until 3 years after plan is adopted, superseded, or obsolete.

3. Inspecting and Enforcing

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| <p>3.01 Plan Review Records. This series documents the review of construction plans for fire code compliance.</p> | <p>Retain until Certificate of Occupancy is issued.</p> |
| <p>3.02 Fire Department Safety/Compliance Inspection Files. This series documents routine building inspections to ensure compliance with the fire code. The series consists of inspection forms and summaries. Information may include: address and description of building, owner's name, inspecting officer's name, date of initial and follow-up inspections, list of violations found, and remarks by the inspector. (See the Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 36-19-11 through -13).</p> | <p>Retain 3 years after correction of violation. If no violation is found, retain 3 years.</p> |
| <p>3.03 Fire Prevention Plans. Review of structure, along with flammable material contained within, alarm systems, placement of extinguishers and emergency numbers.</p> | <p>Retain until superseded</p> |
| <p>3.04 Alarm Permit Files. Installation certificates for fire detection and fire alarm devices or systems filed with fire agencies.</p> | <p>Retain for life of the device or system.</p> |
| <p>3.05 Automatic Sprinkler System File. Automatic sprinkler material and test certificates filed with fire agencies.</p> | <p>Retain for the life of the system.</p> |
| <p>3.06 Controlled Burn Records. Applications for permits for approved burning of leaves and debris, when permitted by the fire department.</p> | <p>Retain 3 years.</p> |
| <p>3.07 Fireworks Display Registrations. Applications or registrations identifying the location of fireworks displays.</p> | <p>Retain 3 years.</p> |
| <p>3.08 Registration Records. These records document applications and permits issued by the local fire authority.</p> | <p>Retain 3 years.</p> |

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| 3.09 | Hazardous Substances Right to Know Files. Consists of detailed product/chemical identification listings supplied by individual employers that hold, use, or sell products considered hazardous by the US Department of Labor, Division of Occupational Health and Safety. Series may include US Department of Labor forms or material safety data sheets, emergency and hazardous chemical inventory forms, company emergency plans, inspection reports, or other mandated documentation relating to hazardous substances. | Retain 7 years after employer no longer conducts business in the fire department's district. |
| 3.10 | Fire/EMS/hazardous materials incident reports. Record of hazardous material incidents. | Retain 10 years. |
| 3.11 | Storage Tank Files. Record detailing the installation/removal of individual storage tanks and the storage of flammable or hazardous materials. May include permits for the maintenance, installation, abandonment, or removal of storage tanks, permits for the storage of hazardous/flammable substances, inspections, plans, complaints, memos, and correspondence. | Retain 7 years after removal of tank. |
| 3.12 | Fire Hydrant Master List. | Retain until superseded. |
| 3.13 | Fire Hydrant Inspection Reports. Records documenting the installation and maintenance of fire hydrants. | Retain 5 years. |
| 3.14 | Fire Alarm and Automatic Extinguisher File. Certificates, licenses, and insurance certificates of companies that perform installations of fire alarm and automatic extinguishing systems. | Retain until superseded or obsolete. |
| 3.15 | Apparatus Inspection Records. Reports of the inspection and testing of equipment, such as self-contained breathing apparatus, including reports of all tests. | Retain 3 years. |
| 3.16 | Protective Clothing Records. Daily or other periodic reports on the inspection of protective clothing. | Retain 3 years. |

4. Investigating

- 4.01 Fire Investigation Reports.** These records document the investigation of fires by fire departments. Under the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 15-3-5), there is no statute of limitations on the crime of arson.

Reports of investigations that result in criminal charges

PERMANENT

Reports of investigations that do not result in criminal charges

Retain 10 years after investigation is resolved.

5. Providing Education and Outreach Services

- 5.01 Drill and Simulation Records.** Reports and related documentation of drills, simulations, and triage exercises conducted or participated in by fire, emergency medical, or emergency communications personnel with hospitals, schools, and other entities. Retain 5 years.
- 5.02 Blood Pressure Testing Logs.** This record series consists of informal blood pressure testing logs generated during free tests conducted by a fire station. The records may include, the date and time of the test and the name of the department employee who administered the test. The retention period is based on the statute of limitations to file an action on negligence according to the Code of Alabama 6-2-38. Retain 2 years.
- 5.03 Child Seat Inspection Reports.** Fire Departments may offer a service where a parent/caregiver may arrive at a Fire Department and ask for someone to look at their child seat to ensure that it was installed properly. These records may include, driver's name, address, contact information, vehicle information, child's name, information related to the car seat, and the department employee who conducted the inspection. The retention period is based on the statute of limitations to file an action on negligence according to the Code of Alabama 6-2-38. Retain 2 years.

6. Administering Internal Operations—Managing the Agency

- 6.01 Administrative Reference Files.** These records include materials not created by the fire department; they are collected and used only as reference sources of information. Retain for useful life.
- 6.02 Annual Reports.** Fire departments may create annual narrative reports describing their activities during the calendar or fiscal year. Such reports provide summary documentation of functions, projects, and activities, as well as an ongoing history of the town or city and its government. **PERMANENT**
- 6.03 Historical and Publicity Files.** These records include news releases, newsletters, brochures, periodicals, photographs, videotapes, audiotapes, speeches, and public service announcements created by fire departments. **PERMANENT**

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| 6.04 | Routine Correspondence. This type of correspondence documents the daily conduct of the fire department's affairs in its relations with local citizens and businesses, other governmental agencies, and the general public. It relates to everyday matters (such as answering inquiries, providing information, or performing mandated services) rather than to policy development or issues of long-term administrative impact. | Retain 3 years. |
| 6.05 | Legal Case Files. These records document lawsuits filed by or against the fire department. | Retain 6 years after the case is closed. |
| 6.06 | Complaint Files/Unlitigated Claims for Damages. These records document damage claims against the fire departments that are resolved without litigation. | Retain 2 years after settlement or denial of complaint or claim (Code of Alabama 11-47-23). |
| 6.07 | Mailing Lists. These records include various standard lists of names and addresses used by fire department personnel. | Retain for useful life. |
| 6.08 | Mail, Telephone, and Fax Machine Logs. These records are lists of mail, telephone and fax machine contacts and related data. | Retain for useful life. |
| 6.09 | Calendars. These records include desk calendars and other scheduling devices for fire department personnel. | Retain 1 year. |
| 6.10 | Records Management Documentation Records documenting implementation of the fire department's approved RDA. These records include records management plans, records inventories, finding aids, and destruction notices. | Retain 2 years following audit. |

Copy of approved RDA. The RDA provides legal guidelines for the disposition of fire department records. The fire department should maintain a signed copy of the RDA and distribute copies to other agencies as needed.

Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the RDA was superseded.

Local government records deposit agreements. These records are formal agreements executed by the fire department so that a local records repository (library, archives, or historical society) may accept physical custody of long-term records. They include inventories of records in the repository. (Note: Deposit agreements must be approved by the Local Government Records Commission. For information, contact ADAH.)

Retain 10 years after termination of the agreement.

6.11 Records request forms. A fire department may ask visitors wishing to examine records to complete an identification form before providing access. Information in such forms may include visitor's name and contact information, date and time of request, records requested, reason for request, and staff comments.

Retain 2 years following audit or until any resulting litigation is concluded.

6.12 Computer Systems Documentation. These files include hardware and software manuals, diskettes, metadata lists, and warranties.
Disposition: Retain former system documentation 2 years after the audit period in which the former hardware and software no longer exist anywhere in the agency and all permanent records have been migrated to the new system.

6.13 Websites and Social Media Sites. Fire departments develop web and social media sites for responding to public inquiries and providing information on fire department affairs.

PERMANENT
Preserve a complete copy of the web or social media site annually, or as often as significant changes are made.

7. Administering Internal Operations—Managing Finances

7.01 Budgeting Records. These records document preparing a budget request package and reporting the status of funds, requesting amendments of allotments, and reporting program performance.

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| | <p>Departmental budget estimates and requests. These records contain information submitted by fire departments during budget preparation.</p> | <p>Retain 2 years following audit.</p> |
| | <p>Approved annual budgets. These records are the final fire department budgets and are often maintained by the governing authority of the fire department when one exists.</p> | <p>PERMANENT If copy of budget is included with minutes, retain additional copies for useful life.</p> |
| | <p>Records documenting budget performance during the budget cycle (budgeted and actual revenue reports, investment reports, expenditure reports, encumbrance reports, etc.)</p> | <p>Retain 2 years following audit.</p> |
| | <p>Annual financial reports. At the end of the fiscal year, a summary statement of fire department finances may be included in governing authority minutes and published in the local newspaper.</p> | <p>PERMANENT If a copy of the report is included with the minutes, retain additional copies for useful life.</p> |
| <p>7.02</p> | <p>Audit Reports. These records document the fire department’s overall financial condition, and the findings of its independent auditor during each audit period. If official audit report is maintained by another department under its governing authority, audit reports maintained by the fire department may be considered duplicative.</p> | <p>PERMANENT</p> |
| <p>7.03</p> | <p>Accounting Records</p> | <p>Retain 2 years following audit.</p> |
| | <p>Routine accounting records. These are records of original entry or other routine accounting transactions, including journals, registers, ledgers, receipts, invoices for services, bank statements, deposit slips, canceled checks, and other supporting documentation.</p> <p><u>Recommendation:</u> returned checks, or other records documenting the fire department’s efforts to collect unpaid fees or service charges may need to be retained until collection, even if that period exceeds the state retention.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Disposition for grant-related accounting records is provided under grants.</p> | |
| <p>7.04</p> | <p>General Ledgers and detailed year end trial balances. These are records of final entry for all financial transactions collecting revenue (taxing and licensing), purchasing, investing, administering state and federal funds, and general accounting.</p> | |

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| Records created prior to 1975 | PERMANENT |
| Records created in or after 1975 | Retain 10 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the record was created. |
| <p>7.05 Purchasing Records. These records document the requisitioning and purchasing of supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, and authorizing payment for products.</p> <p><u>Note:</u> Disposition for grant-related purchasing records is provided under grant records.</p> | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| <p>7.06 Contracts, Leases, Franchises, and Agreements. These records document the negotiation, fulfillment, and termination of all contracts, leases, franchises, and agreements entered into by the fire department, including final contracts that are subject to the bid process.</p> | Retain 10 years after expiration of the contract (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 6-2-33). |
| <p>7.07 Records of Formal Bids. These records document the bid process, which is subject to the requirements of Title 41, Section 16 of the Code of Alabama.</p> | |
| <p>a. Records documenting bids on products or services obtained by the municipality. These records include fire department requests for bid proposals, successful and unsuccessful bids by product or service vendors, and related correspondence.</p> | Retain 7 years after the date bids were opened (Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-16-54(e)). |
| <p>Lists of eligible bidders. Fire departments may compile lists of persons or businesses who have filed requests to be notified of bids on projects, products, or services required by the municipality.</p> <p>Requests from bidders to be included on the list may be treated as routine correspondence.</p> | Retain 3 years after last contact with listed vendors. |

- c. Correspondence with vendors slated for removal from the list of eligible bidders.** Under Section 41-16-54(a) of the Code of Alabama, any listed bidder who fails to respond after receiving three solicitations for bids may be stricken from the eligible list. This correspondence documents the fire department's efforts to warn unresponsive vendors that they will be dropped from the list unless they ask to remain eligible. It includes forms or letters sent out by the municipality and any responses from the vendors. Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the bidder is removed from the list.
- 7.08 Verification of Employees' Legal Immigration Status.** These records document enforcement of Section 9 of Act 2011-535 of the Alabama legislature, commonly known as the Immigration Act. They consist of affidavits and/or E-Verify Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) stipulating that active or prospective vendors do not knowingly employ illegal immigrants. Retain 3 years after last contract with vendor.
- 7.09 Grant Project Files.** These records document the fire department's application for and conduct of grant projects funded by local, state, federal, or private sources. Disposition is as follows:
- Financial reports, interim narrative reports, and correspondence.** These records include financial reports, interim narrative reports, background materials, and other non-financial supporting documentation for grants awarded. Also included are records relating to unsuccessful grant applications. Retain 6 years after submission of final financial report or denial of application.
- Subsidiary financial records.** These records include accounting or purchasing records and any other subsidiary financial documentation of federal grants, excluding financial reports. (See federal Rule 1354.) Retain 3 years after submission of final financial report.
- Final narrative report.** Final narrative reports are submitted according to the requirements of the funding agency. They summarize the goals of the grant, how the money was used, and what was accomplished. **PERMANENT**
- 7.10 Investment Reports.** These records provide summary documentation of the fire department's financial investments. Retain 2 years following audit.
- 7.11 Travel Records.** These records document requests by fire department personnel for authorization to travel on official business, and related materials such as travel reimbursement, forms and itineraries. Retain 2 years following audit.

8. Administering Internal Operations—Managing Human Resources

- 8.01 Employee Handbooks.** These records provide guidance to new employees about personnel rules and other policies and procedures. **PERMANENT**

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| 8.02 | Employee Newsletters. These records are internal newsletters created for government employees to communicate personnel policies, news of important events, and information on individual employees. | PERMANENT |
| 8.03 | Job Classification and Pay Plans. These records document the various job classifications used by the fire departments. They include the qualifications, duties, and pay range for each position. The required retention depends on whether the fire department has a separate personnel department: | |
| | Personnel department copy (or file held by individual departments if there is no personnel department) | PERMANENT |
| | Copies held by other departments (duplicate file) | Retain 4 years after position is reclassified. |
| 8.04 | Examination Records. These records document the development of and administration of examinations for employment in positions. | |
| | Examination history files. These files document the development of employment examinations. They include questionnaires, comparison studies, final copies of examinations, and job announcements. | Retain 1 year after examination is no longer in use. |
| | Examination administrative files. These records document the administration of examinations to applicants for positions. They include rating forms, answer sheets, and lists of applicants. | Retain 3 years. |
| 8.05 | Typing tests. These records document typing tests given to potential job applicants before accepting their applications for employment. They may include printouts showing the tests taken, with errors; summaries of results; demonstration forms used by the staff; and sign-in sheets. | Retain 1 year. |
| 8.06 | Certification Records. These records document the process of employee certification. They pertain to individuals deemed qualified for positions after submitting an application and taking an employment examination. | |
| | Employment registers. These records are lists of individuals declared qualified for certain positions. They include the job classification, names of eligible applicants, and their ranking on the list. | Retain 1 year after superseded. |
| | Employee certification files. These records document the certification process with individual job applicants. They include questionnaires, training and experience records, grades, notifications, and returned postcards and letters. | Retain 3 years. |

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| 8.07 | Job Recruitment Materials. These records document efforts by the fire department to advertise positions and attract qualified personnel. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.08 | Employment Applications. These records document applications by individuals for employment in municipal positions. | |
| | Successful applications | Retain in employee personnel file. |
| | Unsuccessful applications (received in response to specific job announcements) | Retain 3 years. |
| | Supplemental data forms. Information on these forms includes the job applicant’s name, Social Security number, date of birth, race, gender, and recruitment source. The form may be separated and filed separately from other information on the employment application. | Retain 6 years after employee separation or 3 years after an unsuccessful application. |
| 8.09 | I-9 forms. These federal forms are used to verify that persons seeking employment are eligible to work in the United States. Disposition of the employing agency’s copy is provided by 8 CFR 274a.2. | Retain 3 years after employment or 1 year after termination, whichever is longer. |
| 8.10 | Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Files. These records document allegations regarding non-compliance with hiring regulations established by the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. <u>Note:</u> “Whenever a charge of discrimination has been filed, or an action brought by the Attorney General—[retain] until final disposition of the charge or action” (29 CFR 1602.31, 1602.20). | Retain 3 years. |
| 8.11 | Employee Personnel Files. These records document each fire department’s employee’s work history; they are generally maintained as case files. A file may include information on an employee’s training, performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, promotions and demotions, awards, leave, and salary. | Retain 6 years after separation of employee. |

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| 8.12 | Blood-Borne Pathogens Reports. These reports are filed whenever fire department/EMS personnel are exposed to blood-borne pathogens. The report becomes part of the employee's work history. Federal requirements mandate minimum 30-year retention of these records. | Retain 30 years or 6 years after separation of employee, whichever is longer. |
| 8.13 | Employee Work Schedules. These records document the daily and weekly work schedules of all employees. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.14 | Annual Reports of Promotions and New Hires. These records summarize overall personnel activity and turnover during the year. They may also include reports of employee retirements, resignations, and terminations. | PERMANENT |
| 8.15 | Leave and Attendance Records. These records document the attendance and leave status of personnel, both generally and for individual employees. | |
| | Individual employee leave and attendance records (including time sheets). These are records documenting hours worked, leave earned, and leave taken by individual employees. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.16 | Employee cumulative leave/attendance records. These records document the final leave status (cumulative leave) of individual employees. | Retain 6 years after separation of employee. |
| | Employee sick leave donation records. These records document the donation of sick leave to their colleagues by employees. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.17 | Payroll Records. These records document fire department payrolls, as well as pay status and payroll deductions for individual employees. Disposition is as follows: | |
| | Annual payroll earnings reports/records documenting payroll deductions for tax purposes (wage and tax statements). These are summaries of employees' earnings during a fiscal year, including all deductions and federal Form 941. | Retain 50 years after the end of the tax year in which the records were created. |
| | Records documenting fire department payrolls. These records include pre-payroll reports, payroll check registers, payroll action forms, payroll/overtime certification reports, etc. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| | Records documenting payroll deduction authorizations. These records document payroll deductions for taxes (including W-4 forms), retirement and insurance contributions, and all other deductions withheld from the pay of individual employees. | Retain 6 years after separation of employee. |

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| | Records documenting payroll deductions. These records document taxes (including W-2 forms), retirement contributions, and all other deductions withheld from the pay of individual employees. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| | Employee “Cafeteria Plan” (Flexible Benefits) Records. These records document salary-reduction type plans authorized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service, Section 125. | |
| | General information about the plan | Retain until superseded. |
| | Employee applications, correspondence, enrollment cards and files | Retain 6 years after termination of the plan. |
| 8.18 | Employee Insurance Program Enrollment and Claims Files. These files document the fire department’s efforts to assist employees and their dependents to enroll in health/life insurance programs, in accordance with established guidelines. | |
| | General information on the program | Retain until superseded |
| | Employee applications, correspondence, and enrollment cards and files | Retain 4 years after program termination or employee separation. |
| | Employee claims files | Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the claim was filed. |
| 8.19 | “Drug-Free Workplace” Records. These records document the fire department’s substance abuse policies and programs, as well as drug and alcohol testing of fire department employees. Under the federal Americans With Disabilities Act, such medical-related records may not be included in Employee Personnel Files. | |
| | Drug/alcohol abuse policy and procedures documentation | Retain 4 years after policy is superseded. |
| | Positive employee drug or alcohol test results, documentation of employee refusals to take tests, documentation of employee referrals and treatment in substance abuse programs, copies of municipality’s annual MIS reports submitted to FTA | Retain 5 years |

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| | Records related to the collection process and employee training | Retain 2 years |
| | Negative employee drug or alcohol test results | Retain 1 year. |
| 8.20 | Workmen’s Compensation Insurance Claim Files. These files document all claims pertaining to work-related injuries or diseases made by fire department employees. (See Code of Alabama 1975, Section 25-5-4.) | Retain 12 years and after the end of the fiscal year in which the transaction occurred. |
| 8.21 | Unemployment Compensation Files. These files provide documentation related to employee claims for unemployment compensation. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.22 | Employee Assistance Program Files. These are administrative records documenting the referral of employees to various assistance programs and subsequent services provided. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.23 | Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Records. These records document administration of the federal Family Medical Leave program, including leave taken, premium payments, employer notices, and correspondence. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 8.24 | Training Records. These records document the fire department’s provision of in-service training and professional development for its employees. They do not include materials obtained from outside sources. Disposition is as follows: | |
| | Training standards, policies, procedures, and publications. These records document the fire department’s overall standards, policies, and procedures in providing specialized training to its employees. They may include general policy statements or guidelines, training manuals, or related publications. | PERMANENT |
| | <u>Note:</u> Permanent retention applies to the file copy. Duplicates may be destroyed when no longer needed. | |
| | Training administrative files. These records document the process of conducting training for employees. They may include individual lesson plans, audiovisual presentations or materials, lists of attendees at workshops or training sessions, sign-in sheets, unpublished handouts, and appraisals of training completed by participants. | Retain for useful life. |

- 8.25 Reports of Fire Department Employees Required to File Statements of Economic Interest.** These records include reports to the Alabama Ethics Commission, and related transmittal letters, copies of statements, and correspondence, pertaining to the filing of Statements of Economic Interest by municipal employees. The reports contain the names of municipal employees who are required to file Statements of Economic Interest. Retain 4 years
- 8.26 Federal Form 1099.** This form is used to report various kinds of income, other than salary, that must be reported for federal tax purposes. It may be issued by the municipality to contract workers, or other temporary workers, who provide services but are not on the regular payroll. Retain 2 years following audit.

9. Administering Internal Operations—Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources

- 9.01 Building Construction and Renovation Files.** These files document the design, construction, repair, and renovation of fire department buildings. Included may be building specifications and floor plans, plans of proposed work, lists of materials, correspondence, memoranda, reports, blueprints, site plans, elevation details, and financial records. Disposition is as follows:
- Plans, specifications, and blueprints of fire department buildings of significant historical interest** (e.g., local archives)
Disposition: **PERMANENT.** Retain in office for life of building; agency may then offer for transfer to a local library, archives, or historical society under the terms of a local government records deposit agreement.
- All other records** (financial records; plans, specifications, and blueprints for buildings lacking significant historical interest) Retain for life of building.
- 9.02 Records of rented buildings or facilities** Retain during use of building or facility and transfer to new occupant.

Fixed Assets Records. Records below document the fire department’s ownership of assets (such as land, buildings, and equipment) that are purchased for long-term use and are not likely to be quickly converted into cash. They may include:

- 9.03 Annual Inventory Records.** These records document all personal property, equipment, or capital outlay by the municipality on an annual basis. Retain 2 years following audit.
- 9.04 Appraisals of Real Property Acquired for Municipal Use.** These records document appraisals of private or real property that are performed prior to the fire department acquiring the land for public use (for example, constructing streets, bridges, public parks, and parking lots or garages). Retain 10 years.
- 9.05 Deeds to Fire Department Real Property.** These are copies of records that document the municipality’s ownership of real property. Deeds are held permanently by the county probate office.
Disposition: Retain until property is sold. Verify that the county probate office holds the original deed prior to destruction.
- 9.06 Vehicle and Equipment Ownership Files.** These records document the ownership and maintenance of all vehicles and other equipment owned or maintained by the fire department. They may include titles, bills of sale, and related correspondence. Retain 2 years following the audit period in which equipment or vehicle is removed from inventory.
- 9.07 Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance Files** (work orders, repair records, and related financial records) Retain 2 years following audit.
- 9.08 Facilities/Buildings Inspection Records.** These records document the routine safety and maintenance inspection of municipal buildings, facilities, and such potentially dangerous items as furnaces, elevators, electronic doors, etc. Retain 5 years.
- 9.09 Facilities/buildings maintenance work orders.** These records document routine maintenance activities in municipal buildings or other facilities. Retain 1 year.
- 9.10 Insurance Policies and Claims**
- Insurance policies.** These policies document all insurance policies carried by the fire department on its equipment or property. Retain 10 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the policy was terminated.

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| | Insurance claims involving the fire department. These records document insurance claims filed by the fire department after loss of or damage to municipal property or equipment. Claims do not involve personal accident or injury. | Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the claim was settled. |
| 9.11 | Depreciation Schedules. These records document the expected depreciation, and consequent decline in value, of fire department fixed assets over time. | Retain 2 years after the audit period in which fixed asset is removed from inventory. |
| 9.12 | Receipts of Responsibility for Property. These records document the temporary use or possession of municipal property by employees. | Retain until return of item to property manager. |
| 9.13 | Facilities/Buildings Security Records. These records document the fire department's efforts to provide security to members of the public using its buildings and facilities, as well as to monitor the admission of visitors to these areas. They may include visitors' logs or sign-in sheets, alarm system logs, recordings of security monitoring or response, and any other records documenting security staff's response to alarms or emergencies. | |
| | Security monitoring or response recordings, alarm system and warning siren logs <u>Disposition:</u> Retain 30 days, or until final disposition of any criminal cases, litigation, or other incidents for which recordings provide evidence. | |
| | All other records | Retain 3 years. |
| 9.14 | Motor Pool Use Records. These records document the use of vehicles in the motor pool by employees. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 9.15 | Parking Records. These records document the use of fire department parking facilities by employees or visitors. They may include parking permits, cards, and applications for these items. | Retain 2 years following audit. |
| 9.16 | Long-Distance Telephone Logs. These records document use of the fire department's long-distance telephone systems by employees during business hours. | Retain 2 years following audit. |

Requirement and Recommendations for Implementing the Fire Department Records Disposition Authority

Requirement

Under the Code of Alabama 1975, Section 41-13-23, “no county, municipal, or other local government official, shall cause any . . . record to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of without first obtaining the approval of the Local Government Records Commission.” This RDA constitutes authorization by the Local Government Records Commission to dispose of records as stipulated, with the condition that the responsible official must submit a Local Government Services Destruction Notice to the ADAH Government Services Division to document the destruction. The ADAH, which serves as the commission’s staff, retains local records destruction documentation as a permanent record. (For more information, see the ADAH procedural leaflet *Records Destruction Procedures for Alabama Local Governments*.)

Recommendations

In addition to authorizing a procedure for legally destroying temporary fire department records, the Local Government Records Commission urges the fire department to establish a quality record-keeping program that will meet its legal and public service needs. Such a program should include the following activities:

The fire department should designate a records officer who will be responsible for: ensuring the regular implementation of this RDA, maintaining records in compliance with national and state standards, and coordinating the destruction of disposable records.

Permanent records in the fire department’s custody should be maintained under proper intellectual control and in an environment that will ensure their physical order and preservation. In addition to records appraised as permanent in the RDA, the Local Government Records Commission has directed that any record created prior to 1900 shall be regarded as permanent.

Destruction of temporary records, as authorized in the RDA, should occur agency-wide on a regular basis—for example, after the successful completion of an audit, at the end of an administration, or at the end of a fiscal year. Despite the RDA’s provisions, no record should be destroyed that is necessary to comply with requirements of the state Sunset Act, audit requirements, or any legal notice or subpoena. When records series are combined, the combined record should be maintained for the longest retention period applicable to the original series that were combined.

The fire department should maintain full documentation of any computerized record-keeping system it employs. It should develop procedures for: (1) backing up all permanent records held in electronic format; (2) storing a back-up copy off-site; and (3) migrating all permanent records when the system is upgraded or replaced. If the municipality chooses to maintain a record solely in electronic format, it should employ an electronic records management system that is capable of tying retention and disposition instructions to records in the system and of purging temporary records when their retention period expires. The fire department is committed to funding any

system upgrades and migration strategies necessary to ensure the record's preservation and accessibility for the period legally required.

Microforms of permanent records should conform to quality standards set by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the Association for Image and Information Management (AIIM). Under the Code of Alabama 1975, Sections 41-13-40 through -44, microfilm of public records, "when duly authenticated by the custodian thereof, shall have the same force and effect at law as the original record. . . ." No microfilmed record may be legally destroyed "until the microfilm copy has been processed and checked with the original for accuracy." Government Services Division staff may examine agency microfilm for compliance prior to destruction of the original records.

Electronic mail may contain permanent, temporary, or transitory record information. Although e-mail records can be printed out, filed, and retained according to the RDA's requirements, the municipality should preferably employ an electronic records management system capable of sorting e-mail into folders and archiving messages having long-term value.

The fire department should notify the ADAH Government Services Division if a new records officer is appointed or if other significant changes occur in records storage conditions or records management procedures. It may also contact the division to request revision of this RDA. Normally, RDA revisions will be submitted to the Local Government Records Commission every two years. ADAH Government Services Division staff will notify fire departments of any records commission-approved changes in record-keeping requirements that apply to fire departments on a statewide basis.

Staff of the Local Government Records Commission may examine the condition of permanent records in the fire department's custody and inspect records destruction documentation. Government Services Division archivists are available to instruct fire department staff in RDA implementation or otherwise assist the fire department in implementing its records management program.

The Local Government Records Commission adopted this Records Disposition Authority on October 21, 2015.



Steve Murray, Chairman
Local Government Records Commission

10/21/15

Date:

By signing below, the agency acknowledges receipt of the retention periods and requirements established by the records disposition authority.

Fire Department/Fire District Chief

Date:

of _____