



# County Technical Assistance Service

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## Methods of Destruction

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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

Methods of Destruction .....	3
------------------------------	---

## Methods of Destruction

**Reference Number:** CTAS-1193

This may seem to be a simple question, but officials often ask “how should I destroy a record?” For many working papers and some temporary records of an office, tossing them in the trash, or better yet, recycling them, is appropriate. However, if there is a possibility that confidential information is included in the records, they should be disposed of in a manner that obliterates this information such as shredding or burning.<sup>[1]</sup> The employees of your office would probably prefer that old temporary payroll records of your office which may contain their social security numbers not be put into a trash bin where someone could sift through them. Similarly, even though the information may be public while it is in your custody, many citizens would prefer that taxpayer records, vehicle registrations and other county records are obliterated when they leave your custody and don't end up blowing around in a landfill for anyone to find. Computer records that are eligible for destruction should be fully deleted with storage disks destroyed, reformatted or over-written with new information to eliminate traces of the old files.

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[1] See Op. Tenn. Att'y Gen. No. 01-040 (March 19, 2001).

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