

# **Fire Departments**



## **Functional Analysis & Records Disposition Authority**

**Revision  
Approved by the  
Local Government  
Records Commission  
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# Functional and Organizational Analysis of Local 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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 FLSA 2005-51, 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 § 9-3-17 identifies a volunteer fire department as having no less than 80 percent unsalaried membership.

## Agency Function and Subfunctions

The mandated function of Fire Departments in Alabama is to protect 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. As such, it is one of the agencies responsible for performing the Public Services function of Alabama government as described in the “Functional Analysis of Alabama Government.”

In the performance of its mandated function, the Local Fire Departments may 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.** The Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-140 authorizes fire protection services, although there is no positive duty to provide them. Firefighters must be trained at local expense, as mandated by Code of Alabama 1975 § 36-32-1 through 36-32-12. Under Code of Alabama 1975 § 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 Code of Alabama 1975 § 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, § 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 considered community landmarks throughout Alabama, they often serve a wide array of outreach and educational roles in their communities. 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 and 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 also often provide guidance on proper installation of child car seats, as well as offer CPR classes and 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 temperatures.
- **Administering Internal Operations.** A significant portion of the Local Fire Departments' work includes general administrative, financial, and personnel activities performed to support the programmatic areas of the agency including:

**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, litigating, legislating (drafting, tracking), publicizing and providing information, managing records, and managing information systems and technology.

**Managing Finances:** Activities include budgeting (preparing and reviewing budget package, submitting the budget package to the Department of Finance, documenting amendments and performance of the budget); purchasing (requisitioning and purchasing supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods, 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; and assisting in the audit process.

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

**Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources:** Activities include inventorying and accounting for non-consumable property and reporting property information to the appropriate authority; leasing and/or renting offices or facilities; providing security for property managed by the agency; insuring property; and assigning, inspecting and maintaining agency property.

# Records Appraisal of Fire Departments

The following is a discussion of the three major categories of records created and/or maintained by the Fire Departments: Temporary Records, Permanent Records, and Records No Longer Created.

## Temporary Records

Temporary records should be held for what is considered their active life and be disposed of once all fiscal, legal, and administrative requirements have been met. Some of the temporary records created by fire departments are discussed below:

- **Internal Ballots and Related Files.** Fire departments may hold internal elections in which employees of a department elect their coworkers to positions of leadership. These records document the results of said elections. Records in this series include, but are not limited to, secret employee ballots, tabulated voting results, and lists of voters.

## Permanent Records

The Archives Division has appraised 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 § 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 § 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 1975 and may have critical evidentiary value in case of litigation. Fire Department policies may be available to citizens in printed form.

## Investigating

- **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 § 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.

## Administering Internal Operations: Managing the Agency

- **Administrative Files that Document Core Agency Functions and Decisions.** These records document the core activities, actions, and positions of the agency by senior-level officials. The scope of this series does not include materials documenting the routine financial, human resources, and facilities management activities which this agency performs. These records may include, but are not limited to, correspondence with public officials and other stakeholders, legal/advisory correspondence, organizational charts, and memoranda. The decision-making process of the agency and its leadership has long-term historical significance and should therefore be preserved.
- **Department Accreditation and Certification Records – Insurance Services Office (ISO) Summary Reports.** Fire departments pursue certification through the Insurance Services Office (ISO) in order to receive tax funding. ISO examines a department's operations and capacity as part of certification. This may include, but is not limited to, number and qualifications of personnel, types and capabilities of equipment in use, number and type of hydrants within the department's service area, and type and capability of emergency response systems. At the conclusion of a certification or recertification assessment, ISO issues a summary report of its findings. ISO Summary Reports should be retained permanently to document how fire department capacity changes over time.

## **Permanent Records List Fire Departments**

### **Making and Implementing Policy**

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

### **Investigating**

1. Fire Investigation Reports – reports of investigations that result in criminal charge

### **Providing Education and Outreach Services**

1. Educational Program Records – Representative Final Versions of Educational Program Records.

### **Administering Internal Operations: Managing the Agency**

1. Annual Reports
2. Representative Final Versions of Informational and Promotional Materials
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 the authority granted by the Code of Alabama 1975 § 41-13-5 and 41-13-22 through 24. It was compiled by the Archives Division, Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH), which serves as the Commission's staff, in cooperation with representatives of the Fire Departments. The RDA lists records created and maintained by the Agency in carrying out their mandated functions and activities. It establishes minimum retention periods and disposition instructions for those records and provides the legal authority for the Agency to implement records destruction.

Alabama law requires public officials to create and maintain records that document the business of their offices. These records must be protected from "mutilation, loss, or destruction," so that they may be transferred to an official's successor in office and may be made available to members of the public. Records also must be kept in accordance with auditing standards approved by the Examiners of Public Accounts (Code of Alabama 1975 § 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 agency records manager or ADAH Archives Division at (334) 242-4452.

## **Explanation of Records Requirements**

The RDA shall govern the disposition of all records, regardless of format, created by the agency from creation to dissolution. Please contact the staff of the Department of Archives and History before destroying any records created prior to 1940.

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

The 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 record-like materials are not actually regarded as official records and 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; (2) catalogs, trade journals, and other publications received that require no action and do not document agency activities; (3) stocks of blank stationery, blank forms, or other surplus materials that are not subject to audit and have become obsolete; (4) transitory records, which are temporary records created for short-term, internal purposes, 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; (5) honorary materials, plaques,

awards, presentations, certificates, and gifts received or maintained by the agency staff. They may be disposed of without documentation of destruction.

## **Records Disposition Requirements**

This section of the RDA is arranged by subfunctions of the Agency and lists the groups of records created and/or maintained as a result of activities and transactions performed in carrying out these subfunctions. The Agency may submit requests to revise specific records disposition requirements to the State Records Commission for consideration at its regular biannual meetings.

### **Making and Implementing Policy**

**1.01 Administrative Correspondence.** This correspondence documents the formulation of policy or rule-making decisions by the board.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**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.)

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**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.

Dispositions: Temporary Record. 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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

### **Providing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service**

*Note: Alabama Act 2022-345, codified as the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-85, allows municipalities with annual expenditures of less than \$100,000 to submit an annual report to the Examiners of Public Accounts in lieu of a biennial audit. This report “shall constitute the annual audit report,” so qualifying municipalities may use this report in lieu of an audit report when determining whether temporary records with audit-dependent retentions are eligible for destruction.*

### **2.01 Fire and Emergency Dispatch Books, Cards, or Logs.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**2.02 Fire and Emergency Dispatch Recordings.** 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.

- a. **Recorded information that becomes part of a case file**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Transfer to the investigation case file.
- b. **Recorded information that is subject to a received complaint or records request, but is not part of a case file**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 months or until the complaint or records request is resolved, whichever is longer.
- c. **Recorded information that is not subject to a complaint or records request and does not become part of a case file**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 months.

**2.03 Fire District Maps.** These maps document the boundaries of fire districts within a specific county.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

**2.04 Fire Department Run Reports.** Fire departments maintain a record of all trips when emergency vehicles dispatched. The report consists of caller's name, address, and phone number; and date and time of call. It 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

**2.05 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).

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

### **2.06 Fire/Emergency Medical Service Department Reports, Certificates, and Operational Plans.**

- a. **Fire/EMS daily/monthly reports.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.
- b. **Fire/EMS annual reports.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years.

- c. **Fire damage reports.**  
Disposition: Temporary record. Retain 5 years.
- d. **Service licensure certificates and operational plans for EMS providers.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years after certificate/plan is superseded.

**2.07 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; lists of services provided and amounts owed; and total balance due.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after audit.

*Note: For routine fire departments/EMS operations records (accounting and purchasing records; grants; bids and service contracts; personnel and training records; work orders, operations logs, and telephone/radio logs; maintenance data on equipment and facilities), follow the disposition statements for such records in the "Administering Internal Operations" subfunctions.*

**2.08 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after superseded or obsolete.

**2.09 Disaster and Emergency Management Plans.** Records concerning preparedness, evacuations, and operations in the event of a disaster. This includes, but is not limited to, the official copy of the emergency operations plan and all background surveys, studies, and reports.

- a. **If an element of the Emergency Operations plan...**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.
- b. **If not an element of the Emergency Operations Plan...**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded or obsolete.
- c. **Background surveys, studies, reports, and drafts.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until 3 years after plan is adopted, superseded, or obsolete.

## **Inspecting and Enforcing**

**3.01 Plan Review Records.** This series documents the review of construction plans for fire code compliance.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until Certificate of Occupancy is issued.

**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 description of building, owner's name, inspecting officer's name, date of initial and follow-up inspections, lists of violations found, and remarks by the inspector. (See the Code of Alabama 1975 § 36-19-11 through -13).  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after correction of violation. If no violation is found, retain 3 years.

**3.03 Fire Prevention Plans.** Review of structure, along with flammable material contained within, alarm system, placement of extinguishers and emergency numbers.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

**3.04 Alarm Permit Files.** Installation certificates for fire detection and fire alarm devices or systems filed with fire agencies.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for life of the device or system.

**3.05 Automatic Sprinkler System File.** Automatic sprinkler material and test certificates filed with fire agencies.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for the life of the system.

**3.06 Controlled Burn Records.** Applications for permits approved burning of leaves and debris, when permitted by the fire department.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**3.07 Fireworks Display Registrations.** Applications or registrations identifying the location of fireworks displays.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**3.08 Registration Records.** These records document applications and permits issued by the local fire authority.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**3.09 Permitting and Licensing Records, Other.** Local governments regulate a wide range of activities through permits and licenses. While many types are explicitly addressed within this RDA, local governments may also issue permits or licenses that are not specifically described. This record series provides retention guidance for all such permitting or licensing records not otherwise covered in this RDA.

a. **Permits with fees.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for 2 years after audit.

b. **Permits without fees.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year or for the validity of the permit, whichever is longer.

**3.10 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 U.S. 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years after employer no longer conducts business in the fire department's district.

**3.11 Fire/EMS/Hazardous materials incident reports.** Record of hazardous material incidents. Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years.

**3.12 Storage Tank Files.** Records 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years after the removal of tank.

**3.13 Fire Hydrant Master List.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

**3.14 Fire Hydrant Inspection Reports.** Records documenting the installation and maintenance of fire hydrants.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

**3.15 Fire Alarm and Automatic Extinguisher File.** Certificates, licenses, and insurance certificates of companies that perform installations of fire alarm and automatic extinguishing systems.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded or obsolete.

**3.16 Apparatus Inspection Records.** Reports of the inspection and testing of equipment, such as self-contained breathing apparatus, including reports of all tests.

Disposition: Temporary record. Retain 3 years.

**3.17 Protective Clothing Records.** Daily or other periodic reports on the inspection of protective clothing.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

## **Investigating**

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

- a. **Reports of investigations that result in criminal charges.**

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

b. **Reports of investigation that do not result in criminal charges.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years after investigation is resolved.

## **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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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 tests 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 1975 § 6-2-38.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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 1975.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years.

**5.04 CPR Training Records.** These records document Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training and refresher courses conducted for the public by fire department employees. These records do not document the fire department's provision of in-service training and professional development for its own employees. This record series consists of testing and accreditation materials related to the certification or re-certification of course participants.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**5.05 Educational Program Records.** These records document the process of conducting all other training or educational outreach for the public. These records do not document the fire department's provision of in-service training and professional development for its employees.

a. **Representative Final Versions of Educational Program Records.** Examples of these records include, but are not limited to, planning documentation (policies, procedures, standards); audiovisual presentations or materials; and program appraisals.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

- b. **Educational Program Working Files.** Examples of these materials include, but are not limited to, final versions of educational program records not chosen for permanent retention, draft versions of audiovisual presentations, course announcements, lists of attendees at workshops or training sessions, sign-in sheets, rosters, and other routine operational records.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for 2 years.

## **Administering Internal Operations: Managing the Agency**

*Note: Alabama Act 2022-345, codified as the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-85, allows municipalities with annual expenditures of less than \$100,000 to submit an annual report to the Examiners of Public Accounts in lieu of a biennial audit. This report “shall constitute the annual audit report,” so qualifying municipalities may use this report in lieu of an audit report when determining whether temporary records with audit-dependent retentions are eligible for destruction.*

**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.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

**6.02 Administrative Files that Document Core Agency Functions and Decisions.** Records within this series document high-level decision-making processes and organizational changes and may include, but are not limited to, correspondence with public officials and other stakeholders, legal/advisory correspondence, organizational charts, and memoranda.  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**6.03 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.  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**6.04 Representative Final Versions of Informational and Promotional Materials.** These records are created to build public awareness about a variety of issues and government related activities. Examples of these records include, but are not limited to, press releases, brochures, guides, magazines, news articles, advertisements, and posters. The publications document the activities of the local government agency and how it views these activities.  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**6.05 Informational and Promotional Working Files.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

**6.06 Department Accreditation and Certification Records.** Records within this series document how fire departments pursue and receive accreditation or certification from professional standards organizations, including the Insurance Services Office (ISO).

- a. **Insurance Services Office (ISO) Summary Reports.**  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.
- b. **All other ISO certification process records.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after superseded, revocation, or expiration.
- c. **All other accreditation and certification records.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after denial, revocation, or expiration.

**6.07 Internal Ballots and Related Files.** Records within this series document the results of internal elections.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**6.08 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**6.09 Legal Case Files.** These records document legal proceedings where the fire department is a party. These include, but are not limited to, litigation, arbitration, mediation, facilitation, and other legal remedies not otherwise addressed in this RDA.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after the case is closed.

**6.10 Complaint Files/Unlitigated Claims for Damages.** These records document damage claims against the fire departments that are resolved without litigation.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after settlement or denial of complaint or claim (Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-47-23).

**6.11 State Board of Adjustment Files.** These materials relate to involvement in Board of Adjustment proceedings, and include, but are not limited to, claims, supporting documentation, evidentiary materials, findings, decisions, consents, settlements, and other dispositions by the Board.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after final disposition of claim.

**6.12 Mailing Lists.** These records include various standard lists of names and addresses used by fire department personnel.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

**6.13 Mail, Telephone, and Fax Machine Logs.** These records are lists of mail, telephone, and fax machine contacts and related data.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

**6.14 Calendars.** These records include desk calendars and other scheduling devices for fire department personnel.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

### **6.15 Records Management Documentation**

a. **Local Government Records Destruction Notices and Letters of Eligibility.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years.

b. **Agency copies of the approved RDA.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.

c. **File listings, records management plans, and other records documenting implementation of the locality's approved RDA.** This documentation primarily serves an internal purpose and should be transferred to the records custodian's successor.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for duration of administrative value.

**6.16 Open Records Requests and Related Documentation.** This series encompasses requests to view records in accordance with Open Records laws and any related correspondence or other documentation related to the fulfillment or denial of the request(s).

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit. If litigation is initiated during this period, retain until litigation is concluded.

### **6.17 Local Government Records Deposit Agreements.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years after termination of the agreement.

*Note: Deposit agreements must be approved by the Local Government Records Commission. For information, contact the ADAH.*

**6.18 Computer Systems Documentation.** These records document the addition, modification, and removal of software and/or hardware from an agency's computer systems. Documentation in this series may include, but is not limited to, the following record types: current source code, dataset inventories and layouts, hardware/software specifications and changes (including operating system details, server names, IP addresses, and software lists), hardware/software warranties, input/output specifications, instruction manuals (including user guides and vendor-supplied documents), licensing information, local and/or wide area network schematics, operational logs (including audit logs, dataset logs, job logs, programming logs, system development logs, and update logs), performance reports, system backup reports, and system overviews.

- a. **Core computer systems documentation.** This series includes documentation that enables the continued use of data and records contained within computer hardware and software systems.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for the life of the system.

*Note: Agencies should ensure that they maintain documentation that allows them to migrate their data.*

- b. **Routine computer systems documentation.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for the duration of administrative value.

- c. **Warranties and Licenses.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until expiration.

**6.17 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.

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

### **Administering Internal Operations: Managing Finances**

*Note: Alabama Act 2022-345, codified as the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-85, allows municipalities with annual expenditures of less than \$100,000 to submit an annual report to the Examiners of Public Accounts in lieu of a biennial audit. This report “shall constitute the annual audit report,” so qualifying municipalities may use this report in lieu of an audit report when determining whether temporary records with audit-dependent retentions are eligible for destruction.*

**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.

- a. **Departmental budget estimates and requests.** These records contain information submitted by fire departments during budget preparation.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

- b. **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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. If copy of budget is included with minutes, retain additional copies for useful life.

- c. **Records documenting budget performance during the budget cycle (budgeted and actual revenue reports, investment reports, expenditure reports, encumbrance reports, etc.).**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

- d. **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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. If a copy of the report is included with the minutes, retain additional copies for useful life.

**7.02 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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**7.03 Routine Accounting Records.** These are records of original entry or other routine accounting transactions, including journals, registers, ledgers, receipts, invoices for services, lists of fees collected, bank statements, deposit slips, canceled checks, and other supporting documentation.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

Recommendation: 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 that state retention.

Note: Disposition for grant-related accounting records is provided under grants.

**7.04 General Ledgers and detailed year end trial balance.** 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.

- a. **Records created prior to 1975.**

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

- b. **Records created in or after 1975.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the record was created.

**7.05 Purchasing Records.** These records document the requisitioning and purchasing of supplies and equipment, receipting and invoicing for goods and services, and authorizing payment for products. Records in this series may include, but are not limited to, purchase orders, quotes, invoices, purchasing card receipts, and receiving reports.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

Note: Disposition for grant-related purchasing records is provided under grant records.

**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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years after expiration of the contract (Code of Alabama 1975 § 6-2-33).

**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 1975.

a. **Records documenting bids on products or services obtained by the fire department.**

These records include fire department requests for bid proposals, successful and unsuccessful bids by product or service vendors, and related correspondence.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 7 years after the date bids were opened (Code of Alabama 1975 § 41-16-54[e]).

b. **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 department. Requests from bidders to be included on the lists may be treated as routine correspondence.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after last contact with listed vendors.

c. **Correspondence with vendors slated for removal from the list of eligible bidders.**

Under the Code of Alabama 1975 § 41-16-54(a), 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 department and any responses from the vendors.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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 Alabama Act 2011-535, 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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:

a. **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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after submission of final financial report or denial of application.

- b. **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.)  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after submission of final financial report.
- c. **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.  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**7.10 Investment Reports.** These records provide summary documentation of the fire department's financial investment.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. 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.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**7.12 Employer Tax Returns and Related Files.** These records include, but are not limited to, employer state tax returns, federal tax returns, local tax returns, monthly and quarterly tax reporting forms such as federal Form 941, unemployment quarterly reports, and Federal Forms 1099. These records do not pertain to individual employees but instead describe the local government agency as a whole.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**7.13 Sales Tax Exemption Documentation.** Government agencies are legally exempted from paying sales tax per the Code of Alabama 1975 § 40-23-49. Since agencies must occasionally demonstrate their tax-exempt status when dealing with vendors or other contacts, the Alabama Department of Revenue provides proof of sales-tax-exempt status on request.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the record was created.

## **Administering Internal Operations: Managing Human Resources**

*Note: Alabama Act 2022-345, codified as the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-85, allows municipalities with annual expenditures of less than \$100,000 to submit an annual report to the Examiners of Public Accounts in lieu of a biennial audit. This report "shall constitute the annual audit report," so qualifying municipalities may use this report in lieu of an audit report when determining whether temporary records with audit-dependent retentions are eligible for destruction.*

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

**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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**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:

- a. **Personnel department copy (or file held by individual departments if there is no personnel department).**

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

- b. **Copies held by other departments (duplicate files).**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years after position is reclassified.

**8.04 Examination Records.** These records document the development and administration of examinations for employment positions.

- a. **Examinations history files.** These files document the development of employment examinations. They include questionnaires, comparison studies, final copies of examinations, and job announcements.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after examination is no longer in use.

- b. **Examination administrative files.** These records document administration of examinations to applicants for positions. They include rating forms, answer sheets, and lists of applicants.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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.

- a. **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 lists.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after superseded.

- b. **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.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**8.07 Job Recruitment Materials.** These records document efforts by the fire department to advertise positions and attract qualified personnel.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the position is filled.

**8.08 Employment Applications.** These records document applications for employment that are maintained for consideration when vacancies arise. They may also include rejected applications, applications for transfer, and applications for promotion.

- a. **Successful applications.**  
Disposition: Move the information to the employee personnel file.
- b. **Unsuccessful applications.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.
- c. **Supplemental data forms of successful applicants.** Information on these forms may include, but is not limited to, the job applicant's name, Social Security Number, date of birth, race, sex, and recruitment source. The form may be filed separately from other information on the employment application.  
Disposition: Move the information to the employee personnel file.
- d. **Supplemental data forms of unsuccessful applicants.** Information on these forms may include, but is not limited to, the job applicant's name, Social Security Number, date of birth, race, sex, and recruitment source. The form may be filed separately from other information on the employment application.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.
- e. **I-9 forms.** These federal forms are used to verify that persons seeking employment are eligible to work in the United States. Employers must keep a completed I-9 form on file for all employees. The forms must be kept for as long as the employee works for the agency, and for a certain amount of time after separation. The minimum required retention of the employing agency's copy is provided by 8 CFR § 274a.2 (Migrant and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Protection Act).
  - i. If the employee worked for less than two years.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain their form for three years after the date you entered in the First Day of Employment field.
  - ii. If the employee worked for more than two years.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain their form for one year after the date they stop working for you.

- f. **E-Verify case verification numbers.** Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Citizenship and Immigration Services state that employers must record or print and file the E-Verify case verification number for each corresponding I-9 form. Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for 3 years after the date of hire, or 1 year after the date employment ends, whichever is later.

**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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

*Note: "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).*

**8.11 Employee Personnel Files.** These records document each fire department's employees' work history; they are generally maintained as case files. A file may include information on employee background checks, training, performance evaluations, disciplinary actions, promotions and demotions, awards, leave, and salary. These records may be case files maintained by a central city/county personnel office or internal files maintained by a fire department that are not duplicated elsewhere.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee.

**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 a minimum 30-year retention of these records. Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 30 years or 6 years after separation of employee, whichever is longer.

**8.13 Exposure to Hazardous Substances Compliance Files.** These records document the agency's compliance with regulations promulgated by the U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and/or the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). See 29 CFR § 1910 and 40 CFR § 311.

- a. **Records documenting employee exposure to hazardous substances.** Records in this series may include, but are not limited to, the following documents: employee exposure to hazardous substances records; summaries of background data relevant to environmental monitoring and measuring activities; and analyses using exposure or medical records.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for the duration of employment plus 30 years (29 CFR § 1910.1020[d][1][ii] and 40 CFR § 311.1).

- b. **Records documenting employee workplace safety training and risk reduction measures.** Records in this series may include, but are not limited to, the following documents: written certifications of hazard assessments, written certifications documenting the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE), materials used to train employees in the proper usage of PPE, and certifications that the employees understood the PPE training.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for the duration of employment (29 CFR § 1910.132 and 40 CFR § 311.1).

**8.14 Employee Work Schedules.** These records document the daily and weekly work schedules of all employees.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.15 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.

Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

**8.16 Leave and Attendance Records.** These records document the attendance and leave status of agency personnel, both generally and for individual employees.

- a. **Individual employee leave and attendance records (including time sheets).** These are records documenting hours worked, leave earned, and leave taken by individual employees.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.
- b. **Employee cumulative leave/attendance records.** These records document the final leave status (cumulative leave) of individual employees.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after the separation of the employee.
- c. **Employee leave donation records.** These records document the donation of leave to their colleagues by employees.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.17 Payroll Records.** These records document payrolls, as well as pay status and payroll deductions for individual employees.

- a. **Employer annual payroll earnings reports.** These are summaries of employees' earnings during a fiscal year, including all deductions and wage and tax statements.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 50 years after the end of the tax year in which the records were created.
- b. **Records documenting employee payrolls.** These records include pre-payroll reports, payroll check registers, payroll action forms, payroll/overtime certification reports, etc.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years, or 1 year after audit, whichever is longer.

- c. **Records documenting employee payroll deduction authorizations.** These records document payroll deduction authorizations for taxes (including W-4 forms), retirement contributions, and similar deductions withheld from the pay of individual employees. Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after separation of employee.
- d. **Records documenting employee payroll deductions.** These records document taxes (including W-2 forms), retirement contributions, and all other deductions withheld from the pay of individual employees. Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years, or 1 year after audit, whichever is longer.

**8.18 Employee Flexible Benefits Plan Files (applications, correspondence, enrollment cards, and related files).** These records document participation in “cafeteria plans” as provided by the Internal Revenue Code § 125.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years after termination of participation in program.

**8.19 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.

- a. **General information on the program.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.
- b. **Employee applications, correspondence, and enrollment cards and files.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years after program termination or employee separation.
- c. **Employee claims files.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the claim was filed.
- d. **Insurance coverage exclusion notices.** These written notices are provided by individual career firefighters wishing to be voluntarily excluded from the supplemental cancer benefit insurance.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after employee revokes exclusion, retires, or separates from employment.

**8.20 “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.

- a. **Drug/alcohol abuse policy and procedures documentation.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years after policy is superseded.

- b. **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 the department's annual MIS reports submitted to FTA.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for 5 years.
- c. **Records related to the collection process and employee training.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years.
- d. **Negative employee drug or alcohol test results.**  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

### **8.21 Workers' Compensation Records.**

- a. **Workers' Compensation Insurance Claim Files.** These files document all claims made by fire department employees that pertain to work-related injuries or diseases.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 12 years after the end of the fiscal year in which a report of injuries is filed (Code of Alabama 1975 § 25-5-4).
- b. **Proof of Workers' Compensation Insurance.** These records document that the agency possesses workers' compensation coverage. This may be through coverage possessed directly by the state or locality, or through coverage possessed and administered by a contracted vendor on behalf of the locality.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.22 Unemployment Compensation Files.** These files provide documentation related to employee claims for unemployment compensation.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.23 Employee Assistance Program Files.** These are administrative records documenting the referral of employees to various assistance programs and subsequent services provided.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.24 Family and 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.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**8.25 Affordable Care Act Compliance Files.** These records encompass the documentation submitted to the federal government to demonstrate compliance with the Affordable Care Act.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years after submission.

**8.26 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:

- a. **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.  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD.

*Note: Permanent retention applies to the file copy. Duplicates may be destroyed when no longer needed.*

- b. **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.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for useful life.

**8.27 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 department employees. The reports contain the names of employees who are required to file Statements of Economic Interest.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 4 years.

### **Administering Internal Operations: Managing Properties, Facilities, and Resources**

*Note: Alabama Act 2022-345, codified as the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-43-85, allows municipalities with annual expenditures of less than \$100,000 to submit an annual report to the Examiners of Public Accounts in lieu of a biennial audit. This report “shall constitute the annual audit report,” so qualifying municipalities may use this report in lieu of an audit report when determining whether temporary records with audit-dependent retentions are eligible for destruction.*

**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:

- a. **Plans, specifications, and blueprints of fire department buildings of significant historical interest (e.g., local archives).**  
Disposition: PERMANENT RECORD. 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.

**b. All other records (financial records; plans, specifications, and blueprints for buildings lacking significant historical interest).**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain for life of building.

**9.02 Records of Rented Buildings or Facilities.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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 department on an annual basis.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**9.04 Appraisals of Real Property Acquired for Department 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).

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years.

**9.05 Deeds to Fire Department Real Property.** These are copies of records that document the department's ownership of real property. Deeds are held permanently by the county probate office.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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.

Disposition: Temporary Record. 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).**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**9.08 Facilities/Buildings Inspection Records.** These records document routine maintenance safety and maintenance inspection of buildings, facilities, and such potentially dangerous items as furnaces, elevators, electronic doors, etc.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years.

**9.09 Facilities/Buildings Maintenance Work Orders.** These records document routine maintenance activities in buildings or other facilities.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

**9.10 Insurance Policies and Claims.**

- a. **Insurance policies.** These policies document all insurance policies carried by the agency.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 10 years after the end of the fiscal year in which the policy was terminated.
- b. **Insurance claims.** These records document insurance claims filed by the local government agency.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years after the audit period in which the claim was settled.
- c. **Certificates of liability.** These records provide proof of insurance. Certificates are typically valid for a period of one year or less.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.
- d. **Certificates of insurance for vendors.** These certificates are provided by vendors that are providing goods and/or services to a local government agency. The records list the local government as being additionally insured.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 6 years.

**9.11 Depreciation Schedules.** These records document the expected depreciation, and consequent decline in value, of fire department fixed assets over time.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. 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 property by employees.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until return of item to property manager.

**9.13 Security Audiovisual Recordings.** This record series consists of security recordings created to monitor activities and document incidents. They may include, but are not limited to, video recordings, audio recordings, and images from security or surveillance cameras. Security setups vary, and recordings may be continuous, stop-frame, or random use. Recordings or images may capture date and time indexing information, which should be retained contextually with recordings.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 30 days.

*Note: Security audiovisual recordings associated with incidents should be maintained until the incident is resolved.*

**9.14 Facility Access Control Authorization Records for Individuals.** These records include, but are not limited to, documentation surrounding the issuance and accountability of identification badges, access badges and tokens, physical keys, and related assigned-access credentials for buildings and other facilities. Biometric facility access control records also fall within the scope of this series.

a. **Access Control Authorization Records Subject to Federal Tax Information (FTI) Security Guidelines.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after credentials are updated, superseded, or terminated, but in no instance fewer than 5 years (IRS Publication 1075).

b. **All Other Access Control Authorization Records.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year after credentials are updated, superseded, or terminated.

**9.15 Facility Access Control Master Lists.** This series consists of centralized lists that define who has access to specific areas or resources within facilities and their designated levels of access.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until updated, superseded, or terminated.

**9.16 Facility Access Registers and Logs.** These materials include logs, registers, and reports documenting access to buildings and other facilities. Such records include, but are not limited to, gate logs, guard logs, access registers, and similar routine admission registers or security logs.

a. **Facility Access Registers and Logs Subject to Federal Tax Information (FTI) Security Guidelines.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years (IRS Publication 1075).

b. **All Other Facility Access Registers and Logs.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

*Note: Facility access registers and logs associated with incidents should be maintained until the incident is resolved.*

**9.17 Visitor Sign-in Records.**

a. **Visitor Sign-in Records Subject to Federal Tax Information (FTI) Security Guidelines.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 5 years (IRS Publication 1075).

b. **All Other Visitor Sign-in Records.**

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 1 year.

*Note: Sign-in records associated with incidents should be maintained until the incident is resolved.*

### **9.18 Facilities/Buildings Safety Plans and Training Files.**

- a. **Safety plans.** These records document the manner in which agency staff are directed to respond in emergencies. Examples of safety plans include, but are not limited to, fire evacuation protocols, severe weather plans, and active shooter protocols.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain until superseded.
- b. **Training files.** These records document the training and practice undertaken by staff to implement safety plans. Examples of training and practice include, but are not limited to, fire drills, tornado drills, and bomb threat drills.  
Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 3 years.

**9.19 Motor Pool Use Records.** These records document the use of vehicles in the motor pool by employees.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**9.20 Parking Records.** These records documents use of the fire department's parking records by employees during business hours.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

**9.21 Long-Distance Telephone Logs.** These records document the use of the fire department's long-distance telephone systems by employees during business hours.

Disposition: Temporary Record. Retain 2 years following audit.

# **Requirement and Recommendations for Implementing the Records Disposition Authority (RDA)**

## **Requirement**

Under the Code of Alabama 1975 § 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 Records Destruction Notice to the ADAH Archives Division to document the destruction. The ADAH, which serves as the commission’s staff, retains local records destruction documentation as a permanent record.

## **Recommendations**

In addition, the Agency should make every effort to establish and maintain a quality record-keeping program by conducting the following activities:

The Agency should designate a staff member in a managerial position as its records liaison/records manager, who is responsible for: ensuring the development of quality record keeping systems that meet the business and legal needs of the agency, coordinating the transfer and destruction of records, ensuring that permanent records held on alternative storage media (such as microforms and digital imaging systems) are maintained in compliance with national and state standards, and ensuring the regular implementation of the agency’s approved RDA.

Permanent records in the Agency’s custody should be maintained under proper intellectual control and in an environment that will ensure their physical order and preservation.

Destruction of temporary records, as authorized in this 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 Open Meetings Act, audit requirements, or any legal notice or subpoena.

The agency 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 agency chooses to maintain permanent records solely in electronic format, it is committed to funding any system upgrades and migration strategies necessary to ensure the records’ permanent preservation and accessibility.

Electronic mail contains permanent, temporary, or transitory record information. Although e-mail records can be printed out, filed, and retained according to the RDA’s requirements, the office should preferably employ an electronic records management system capable of sorting e-

mail into folders and archiving messages having long-term value.

The staff of the Local Government Records Commission or the Examiners of Public Accounts may examine the condition of the permanent records maintained in the custody of the Agency and inspect records destruction documentation. Agency records managers and/or the ADAH archivists are available to instruct the staff in RDA implementation and otherwise assist the Agency in implementing its records management program.

The Local Government Records Commission adopted this revised Records Disposition Authority on April 22, 2026.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Steve Murray, Chair  
Local Government Records Commission

\_\_\_\_\_  
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

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