

For the Record

The Records Management Blog of the
Alabama Department of Archives & History



Alabama DEPARTMENT OF
ARCHIVES & HISTORY

Local Government Records Destruction 101

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Is your local government conducting a basement cleanup project, carrying out its annual destruction activities, or sorting through electronic files? Did you know that you must request authorization from the Alabama Department of Archives and History (ADAH) each time you plan to destroy local government records?

We have provided below step-by-step instructions to guide you through the process of completing and submitting a [Local Government Records Destruction Notice](#).

After submitting a Local Government Records Destruction Notice to ADAH's Records Management Section, your local government will receive a Letter of Eligibility verifying whether the records are eligible for destruction. After receiving the eligibility letter from ADAH, you may then proceed with records destruction.

Guide to Completing and Submitting a Local Government Records Destruction Notice

Access the Local Government Records Destruction Notice

Downloading and then opening the [Local Government Records Destruction Notice](#) in Adobe Acrobat Reader will allow your local government agency to complete the form electronically. Hover the mouse over blank fields on the form for detailed instructions in completing each part. You may also print the form and fill it out manually, if preferred.

Reference the Sample Completed Destruction Notice

The [Sample Completed Local Government Records Destruction Notice](#) clarifies the types of information requested for each specific field.

Identify the Appropriate Retention Schedule

Select the correct [Records Disposition Authority \(RDA\)](#) for your locality (ex. Municipalities, County Commissions, County Probate Offices, Boards of Education, Law Enforcement Agencies, etc.).

The third section of the Records Disposition Authority (RDA) lists the types of records your locality creates and the minimal amount of time to maintain records; however, local governments are permitted to keep records longer than the time interval specified.

The records listing will help you in determining if records are eligible for destruction; furthermore, information found in the RDA will be used to complete page two of the Local Government Records Destruction Notice, as described in more detail below.

Complete the Contact Information Section (Page 1, Section 1)

The first section of the Local Government Records Destruction Notice consists of contact information. The individual listed at the top of the Destruction Notice will be the primary point of contact for any questions. Anyone who needs to be copied on the Letter of Eligibility returned by records management staff may be included in the secondary box.

Complete the Manner of Destruction, Approximate Date, and Type of Retention Schedule (Page 1, Section 2)

- Identify how records will be destroyed (ex. shredded, burned, etc.).
- Specify the approximate date for when you plan to destroy the records.
- Notate which Record Disposition Authority (RDA) your local government used (ex. Municipalities, County Commissions, County Probate Offices, Boards of Education, Law Enforcement Agencies, etc.).
- Delay entering the total volume being destroyed until after completing the second page.

Delay Adding a Signature until the End of the Process (Page 1, Section 3)

Identify who is the authorizing official to sign off on the destruction notice. The form should be signed after completion.

Complete the Section on Records to be Destroyed (Page 2)

- **“RDA Record #” Field**

To find a record type, you will need to reference the third section of the [Records Disposition Authority \(RDA\)](#) and determine if the record type(s) is/are eligible for destruction. Check ADAH's Records Management website to make sure your local government has the most recent update of the RDA.

Identify the numerical code(s) in the records retention schedule that corresponds with the record type(s) eligible for destruction. Inclusion of the numerical codes will facilitate a timely review of your Notice by ADAH records management staff.

Important Note: If a record type has a multipart listing (i.e. 10.03A, 10.03B, etc.), please clarify to which record type your local government is referring, as the individual parts often have different retentions.

Tip: To easily search for a record type in the RDA, use Ctrl+F to pull up a search box that will allow for a word search.

- **“Records Title as Shown on RDA” Field**

Use the appropriate RDA as listed above to find the record type. The records series title immediately follows the RDA number and will be shown in bold.

You may include variant titles that your local government uses to refer to the records in parentheses. For example, you may list “Routine Accounting Records” as the official title, but in parenthesis list “Cancelled Checks.”

Important Note: Each line should list only one record type regardless of the volume. For example, “Accounting Records” may be 50 cubic feet, whereas “Contracts” may only be .2 cubic feet.

Tip: Copies of the second page of the Local Government Records Destruction Notice may be included if necessary to document additional records requested for destruction.

- **“Date Span” Field**

For each record type, include the year(s) in which these records were created (ex. 2016 or 1970-2005).

- **“Retention as shown on RDA” Field**

Fill in the minimum records retention as listed on the RDA. This information helps determine if the records are eligible for destruction.

- **“Date Audited” Field**

Some minimum retentions are dependent upon an audit date. If the retention in the RDA mentions an audit date (ex. “Retain 2 years following audit”), identify when these records were made available for audit.

Note: Do not list your local government’s most recent audit. Please include when the records being listed on the destruction notice were made available for audit.

Example: Let us consider a local government that has been audited in 2010 and 2017. The local government is submitting a destruction notice that includes records whose minimum retention is “Retain 2 years following audit” and which were originally produced in 2008. The agency

should write “2010” in this field, as this was the audit cycle in which the 2008 records were made available.

If the retention does not mention an audit (ex. “Retain 3 years”), put N/A for Not Applicable.

- **“Volume” Field**

For records in paper form, list how many cubic feet are being destroyed for each record type. See the chart below for approximate estimations.

Paper Records	
1 Box of Copy Paper	1 Cubic Foot
1 Banker’s Box	2 Cubic Feet
1 Legal-Sized File Drawer	2 Cubic Feet
Fifty 100 Foot 35mm Microfilm	1 Cubic Foot
3x5 Cards, Ten 12” Rows	1 Cubic Foot
3 Large Bounds Volumes	1.5 Cubic Feet

For electronic records, list how many bytes (B, KB, MB, GB, TB, or PB) are being destroyed.

Electronic Records	
1 byte (B)	8 bits
1 Kilobyte (KB)	1,024 Bytes
1 Megabyte (MB)	1,024 Kilobytes
1 Gigabyte (GB)	1,024 Megabytes
1 Terabyte (TB)	1,024 Gigabytes
1 Petabyte (PB)	1,024 Terabytes

Complete the Total Records Destroyed (Page 1, Section 2)

Add up the total in the volume column on the second page. Then, go back to the first page and enter the total cubic feet of obsolete paper records destroyed and/or the total bytes of obsolete electronic records destroyed.

Complete the Signature Section (Page 1, Section 3)

Have the authorizing official sign the destruction notice. The notice form may be signed electronically. Alternatively, the form may be printed and signed. Please remember to include the printed name and title of the authorizing official as well.

Note: For schools, the notice must be signed by the Superintendent of Education for your district, in accordance with Alabama Department of Education policy.

Submit your completed Local Government Records Destruction Notice via Email

Email the Local Government Records Destruction Notice as an attachment to the Records Management Section of the Alabama Department of Archives and History at becky.hebert@archives.alabama.gov.

Please include a subject line such as “Local Government Records Destruction Notice” and a signature line so that our staff are sure to distinguish your local government email from spam.

Wait for an Email including the Letter of Eligibility from the Records Management Section

Notices filled out correctly may be returned in a few days; however, those destruction notices with errors may take a few weeks to be processed. Your Letter of Eligibility will include a copy of your Local Government Records Destruction Notice.

Destroy Records in a Secure Manner

Employ secure destruction methods such as shredding or burning to ensure the complete destruction of confidential information.

Maintain a Copy of Your Letter of Eligibility and Destruction Notice

Your local government should keep a copy of the Letter of Eligibility and the Local Government Records Destruction Notice for your files to prove legal destruction of records.

Additional Information

For additional information on RDAs, please visit our blog post titled, “Records Disposition Authority: Roadmap for Records Retention.”