



WHICH RECORD FORMAT IS THE BEST? Electronic, Microfilm, or Paper—It depends...

Authority: What is a Record? Under AS 40.21.150(6)—Definition of *Record* and AS 40.25.220—Definition of *Public Record*, a variety of state information can constitute record material, depending upon its creation, maintenance and use.

Electronic Records: Under AS 40.21.150(4) an electronic record means "any information that is recorded in machine readable form." Electronic records, due to their inherently fragile nature, do not last *forever*—like paper and microfilm—and agencies must ensure that these electronic records are durable for as long as its records retention schedule requires under 4 AAC 59(a)(10).

Agencies may use the following matrix to quickly zero in on appropriate media choices for optimal records administration under AS 40.21 (State Records Act) and 4 AAC 59.005.

<u><i>When these conditions apply...</i></u>	<u><i>Consider these formats...</i></u>		
Access considerations	Paper	Microfilm	Electronic
Users need rapid access to information	Good	Poor	Excellent
Multiple users need simultaneous access	Poor	Poor	Excellent
Data must be secure from misfiling, loss, alteration & theft	Fair	Good	Excellent
Records storage space is limited	Poor	Excellent	Excellent
Retention & preservation considerations	Paper	Microfilm	Electronic
Information must be kept up to 15 years	Excellent	Excellent*	Excellent
Information must be kept >15 years	Excellent	Excellent	Good**
Information is vital to the continuity of operations and can easily be duplicated for disaster recovery	Poor	Excellent***	Excellent
<p>* Costs for microfilming records with <15 year retention must be carefully assessed.</p> <p>** Agency policies, procedures, and compliance with 4 AAC 59.005 (Retention & Preservation of Electronic Records) can ensure longevity of information.</p> <p>*** For long-term records storage the State Archives recommends a combination of electronic and either microfilm or paper. Contact the archives if you have any questions.</p>			