



Office of the Secretary of State  
Washington State Archives

## Records Management Advice

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### **Electronic Records Management: Digital Audio/Visual Recordings – Recommendations & Best Practices**

**Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on the best practices for preserving digital audio recordings.**

The requirement to preserve public records and information comes with the burden of providing access by keeping up with the rapid changes in technology. These changes present challenges for the long-term preservation of records.

Digital recordings are currently used to memorialize and create a number of different record types. Some examples may include:

- Council, board and commission meetings.
- Legal proceedings.
- Other open public meetings and proceedings.

Some records created in digital formats must be retained for only a few years, while others must be preserved in perpetuity.

Recommendations and best practices that help ensure future access to digital recordings are:

1. Use uncompressed (lossless) files types for long-term records, such as WAV. An edited, or smaller sized file through “lossy” compression may be used for day-to-day access.
2. Do not rely on CDs or DVDs as storage media for long-term preservation of digital recordings. While the disks themselves will last for years, the data is vulnerable to loss within 18 months under some circumstances.
3. Create back-ups of the recordings on different storage media. Independent hard drives or servers are recommended.

Agencies need to periodically assess their storage media and strategize migration and systems support in order to meet the requirements of managing public records in this challenging era of ever-changing technology.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from  
Washington State Archives:**

**[www.sos.wa.gov/archives](http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives)  
[recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov)**