

**RULES
OF
TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE AND INSURANCE
CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

**0780-07-02
RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR ACCESS TO PUBLIC RECORDS**

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0780-07-02-.01 PURPOSE.

- (1) The purpose of this chapter is to establish a procedure for providing economical and efficient access to public records as required under the Tennessee Public Records Act ("TPRA"), T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501 et seq.
- (2) The TPRA provides that all state, county and municipal records shall, at all times during business hours, be open for personal inspection by any citizen of the state of Tennessee. Those in charge of the records shall not refuse such a right of inspection to any citizen of the state of Tennessee, unless otherwise provided by state law. Accordingly, the public records of the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance ("TDCI") are presumed to be open for inspection unless otherwise provided by law.
- (3) Employees of the department, through the Public Records Request Coordinator ("PRRC") identified in these rules, shall timely and efficiently provide access and assistance to persons requesting to inspect or receive copies of public records. No provisions of this rule shall be used to hinder access to non-confidential public records. However, the integrity and organization of public records as well as the efficient and safe operation of the department shall be protected as provided by law.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. and 2008 Public Chapter 1179. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed November 22, 2010; effective February 20, 2011. Amendments filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.02 APPLICATION.

These rules apply to all agencies, divisions, administrative offices, boards, commissions, programs, committees or other governmental entities within and administratively attached to TDCI.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 4-3-301, et seq. and 10-7-501, et seq.; and 2008 Public Chapter 1179. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed November 22, 2010; effective February 20, 2011. Amendments filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.03 DEFINITIONS.

As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise requires:

- (1) "Assistant Commissioner" means an assistant commissioner of TDCI, or an assistant commissioner's designee.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.03, continued)

- (2) "Commissioner" means the commissioner of TDCI or the commissioner's designee. If the commissioner or the commissioner's designee is absent and unable to act or the office of the commissioner is vacant, a deputy commissioner.
- (3) "Confidential Record" means any departmental record that is considered confidential or privileged under federal or state law, including, without limitation and without waiving any privilege or any right to confidentiality available under federal or state law, as follows:
 - (a) Any record or portion of any record that is not subject to public inspection or is defined as confidential under the TPRA;
 - (b) Any record or portion of any record that is otherwise protected as confidential or privileged under any federal or state law or regulation or pursuant to any court order;
 - (c) Any record that is protected under the attorney-client privilege;
 - (d) Any record that is protected under the attorney work product doctrine; and
 - (e) Any record that is protected under any other statutory or common law privilege.
- (4) "Department" means the Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance ("TDCI").
- (5) "Deputy Commissioner" means a deputy commissioner of TDCI, or a deputy commissioner's designee.
- (6) "Office of Open Records Counsel" or "OORC" means the office established by T.C.A. §§ 8-4-601 et seq., within the Tennessee Comptroller of the Treasury.
- (7) "Public records" means all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, microfilms, electronic data processing files and output, films, sound recordings, or other material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or in connection with the transaction of official business by the department. Public records do not include the device or equipment that may have been used to create or store a public record, including, but not limited to, a cell phone, computer, or other electronic or mechanical device or equipment. See T.C.A. § 10-7-503.
- (8) "Public Records Request Coordinator" or "PRRC" means the individual who has, or individuals who have, the responsibility to ensure public records requests are routed to the appropriate records custodian and are fulfilled in accordance with the TPRA, or the designee of the PRRC. The PRRC shall be the individual(s) designated as Associate General Counsel for Administration.
- (9) "Records Custodian" means the official or employee lawfully responsible for the direct custody and care of public records. The records custodian is not necessarily the original preparer or receiver of the record.
- (10) "Redacted record" means a public record from which confidential information is removed or made obscure prior to release or inspection.
- (11) "Request form" means the most current records request form developed by the OORC at the time of the request and may include the form as adopted by TDCI.
- (12) "Requestor" means a Tennessee citizen requesting access to public records, whether it is for inspection or duplication.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.03, continued)

- (13) "Response form" means the most current records response form developed by the OORC at the time of the request and may include the form as adopted by TDCI.
- (14) "TPRA" means the Tennessee Public Records Act, T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501 et seq.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 8-4-601; 10-7-501, et seq.; and 2008 Public Chapter 1179. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed November 22, 2010; effective February 20, 2011. Amendments filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.04 MAKING A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST.

- (1) All public records requests shall be made to the PRRC in order to ensure public records requests made pursuant to the TPRA are routed to the records custodian and fulfilled in a timely manner. All public records requests by or on behalf of news media organizations shall be made to the department's communications director.
- (2) Proof of Tennessee citizenship is required as a condition to inspect or receive copies of public records as authorized by T.C.A. § 10-7-503.
 - (a) Proof of citizenship may be furnished by the presentation of a valid Tennessee driver's license, other state-issued photographic identification, or an alternate form of identification acceptable to the PRRC that includes the requestor's Tennessee address.
 - (b) Notwithstanding lack of Tennessee citizenship, records may be released or made available to any complainant or respondent seeking information contained within the complaint file(s) to which complainant or respondent is a party, any state or federal agency conducting official business, or any person to whom the release of the records is determined to be in the best interests of the state of Tennessee by the commissioner, deputy commissioner, or assistant commissioner.
- (3) Requests for Inspection
 - (a) Requests for inspection may be communicated to the PRRC in person or via telephone, mail, fax, or email. A written request for inspection shall not be required. The PRRC may request written verification of a verbal request in order to facilitate recordkeeping and ensure accuracy in fulfilling the request; however, the PRRC shall not require written verification unless otherwise authorized by law. Requestors shall ensure the department has sufficient and accurate information to fulfill any request for inspection.
 - 1. The Department's contact information for making requests for inspection is as follows:

500 James Robertson Parkway
Davy Crockett Tower
Nashville, TN 37243
Telephone: (615) 741-3388
Fax: (615) 741-4000
Email: TDCIopen.Records@tn.gov
 - (b) The PRRC may request a mailing and/or email address from the requestor for the purpose of providing any responsive written communication required under the TPRA. Requestors shall reasonably provide such contact information.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.04, continued)

- (c) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 10-7-503, if a requestor makes two (2) or more requests to inspect public records within a six (6) month period and, for each request, the requestor fails to inspect the public records within fifteen (15) business days of receiving notification that the record is available for inspection, then the department is not required to comply with any subsequent public records request from the requestor for a period of six (6) months from the date of the second request to view the public record unless the department determines the failure to inspect the public records was for good cause.
- (4) Requests for Copies
 - (a) Requests for copies, or requests for inspection and copies, shall be made in writing using the request form and submitted to the PRRC in person or via mail, fax, or email. If the commissioner, deputy commissioner, or assistant commissioner determines that completion of the request form creates an undue burden on the requestor, then a clear, documented email or other substitute writing may be sufficient for the request.
 - 1. The Department's contact information for making requests for copies is as follows:

500 James Robertson Parkway
Davy Crockett Tower
Nashville, TN 37243
Telephone: (615) 741-3388
Fax: (615) 741-4000
Email: TDClopen.Records@tn.gov
 - (b) Requests for copies of records during or following an inspection of records shall be made in writing, and the department shall be notified of the number of copies that the requestor wishes to make. A requestor may not use the requestor's personal equipment to make copies until a written request has been submitted and authorization granted by the PRRC.
- (5) Standing public records requests shall not be permitted. Requestors shall submit a new request for inspection or copies of records each time the requestor would like to inspect or receive copies of responsive records.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.05 RESPONDING TO A PUBLIC RECORDS REQUEST.

- (1) Public Records Request Coordinator
 - (a) Upon receipt of a public records request, the PRRC shall:
 - 1. Review the request and make an initial determination of the following:
 - (i) Whether the requestor provided evidence of Tennessee citizenship;
 - (ii) Whether the records requested are described with sufficient specificity to identify them; and
 - (iii) Whether the department is the custodian of the requested records.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.05, continued)

2. Acknowledge receipt of the request and take any of the following actions as appropriate:
 - (i) Advise the requestor of the need for any of the following documentation that was not provided with the initial request:
 - (I) Proof of Tennessee citizenship; or
 - (II) Request form(s) for copies.
 - (ii) Deny the request in writing, using the response form, if one of the following applies:
 - (I) Requestor is not, or did not present proof that requestor is, a Tennessee citizen;
 - (II) Request lacks sufficient detail or is too broad in scope to identify the specific records to be provided for inspection or copying. If appropriate, the PRRC should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed;
 - (III) The record is not subject to disclosure under the TPRA. The PRRC must provide the specific reference in the denial;
 - (IV) The record does not exist; or
 - (V) The department is not the custodian of the requested records. If the records relate to another governmental entity and the PRRC is aware of the correct entity, the PRRC should advise the requestor of the correct entity and the PRRC for that entity, if known.
 - (iii) Forward the request to the appropriate records custodian within TDCI.

(2) Records Custodian

- (a) Upon receiving a public records request from the PRRC, the records custodian shall promptly make the requested records available, if not specifically exempt from disclosure.
- (b) If it is not practicable for the records custodian to promptly make the requested records available because additional time is necessary to determine whether the requested records exist; to search for, retrieve, or otherwise gain access to the records; to determine whether the records are open; to redact records; or for similar reasons, then the records custodian shall, within seven (7) business days from the records custodian's receipt of the request, send the requestor a response form via email, fax or U.S. mail. The response form shall include a statement of the time reasonably necessary to produce the records. If the records still cannot be produced within the time frame provided in the initial response form, the records custodian should send another response form or letter, whichever is appropriate, indicating when the requestor can expect to receive the records.
- (c) If the records custodian denies a public records request, he or she shall deny the request in writing.
- (d) If the records custodian determines the production of records should be segmented because the records request is for a large volume of records or additional time is

(Rule 0780-07-02-.05, continued)

necessary to prepare the records for access, the records custodian shall notify the requestor that production of the records will be in segments and that a records production schedule will be provided as expeditiously as practicable. If appropriate, the records custodian should contact the requestor to see if the request can be narrowed.

- (e) If the records custodian discovers that records responsive to a records request were omitted, the records custodian shall contact the requestor concerning the omission and produce the records as quickly as practicable.

(3) Redaction

- (a) If a record contains confidential information or information that is not open for public inspection, the records custodian shall redact the information prior to providing access for an inspection or copies. If questions arise concerning redaction, the records custodian should coordinate with counsel or other appropriate parties regarding review and redaction of records. The records custodian and the PRRC may also consult with the OORC or with the Office of Attorney General and Reporter.
- (b) When a redacted record is provided, the records custodian shall provide the requestor with a general basis for redaction. The basis given for redaction shall not disclose confidential information. The records custodian is not required to produce a privilege log or similar document.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.06 INSPECTION OF RECORDS.

- (1) The records custodian shall promptly respond to a public records request for inspection in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.
- (2) There is no charge for inspection of public records.
- (3) Location and Time of Inspection
 - (a) The records custodian shall specify the location for the inspection within the offices of the department.
 - (b) The records custodian may require an appointment for inspection or may require inspection of records at an alternative location under reasonable circumstances.
- (4) The records custodian or a designated employee of the department shall remain with the responsive records at all times and take reasonable precautions to ensure that the integrity of public records is maintained during an inspection.
- (5) If, after viewing the records, a requestor wishes to obtain copies, costs will be calculated based on the copy, labor, and other charges accrued for the entire request. If a requestor seeks only a portion of the documents produced, charges will be calculated by taking the total costs of the records requested for inspection and dividing that cost by the total number of pages produced to create a per page rate. Separate requests for copies of documents that were included in a single inspection request shall be aggregated, within a reasonable time frame, to determine the cost of those copies.
 - (a) A requestor may make copies of records with the requestor's personal equipment. However, prior to doing so, the requestor shall make a written request for copies as provided in Rule 0780-07-02-.04 and certify in writing that the department produced the

(Rule 0780-07-02-.06, continued)

records as initially requested. Any copies made with the requestor's personal equipment, including any in excess of the originally requested amount, shall be identified by the requestor and charged to the requestor by invoice. A requestor who fails to pay for costs of records properly produced pursuant to a request may be referred for collection of the debt owed.

(b) Limitations on use of personal equipment:

1. Any video or images captured using a cell phone or other electronic recording shall be limited to the records requested for inspection.
 2. The requestor shall not connect any personal equipment to a department computer or electronic device, including but not limited to, wireless technology or a portable storage device to make copies of public records.
- (6) If a records request is determined by the PRRC or records custodian to be so large that production of all of the requested records cannot be provided for an inspection at a single time, then the records may be produced in segments. The requestor shall be notified in writing when the next segment of records is expected to be available. Written notice shall also be provided to the requestor if there is any change regarding the date of production. Costs associated with any records produced as part of such a rolling production schedule shall be paid as set out in these rules for the segment of the records produced and no additional records will be produced until payment has been received for the copies received.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.07 COPIES OF RECORDS.

- (1) The records custodian shall promptly respond to a public records request for copies in the most economic and efficient manner practicable.
- (2) Upon payment of costs, physical copies may be made available for pickup at a location specified by the records custodian or mailed to the requestor's address.
- (3) The records custodian may provide electronic copies via email, portable storage device, or other electronic medium upon payment for costs.
- (4) A requestor may submit a written request as provided in Rule 0780-07-02-.04 to make copies of records with the requestor's personal equipment, which may be granted if practicable. If the request is submitted as an amendment to a prior request for copies, the requestor shall certify in writing that the department produced the records as initially requested, if applicable. All costs reasonably accrued for the production of the copies as originally requested shall be paid prior to the requestor making copies of records under this paragraph; such costs shall include, but not be limited to any costs for labor, paper copies, or other costs accrued.

(a) Limitations on use of personal equipment:

1. Any video or images captured using a cell phone or other electronic recording shall be limited to the records requested for copying.
2. The requestor shall not connect any personal equipment to a department computer or electronic device, including but not limited to, wireless technology or a portable storage device to make copies of public records.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.07, continued)

- (5) A requestor who fails to pay for costs associated with records properly produced pursuant to a request may be referred for collection of the debt owed.
- (6) If a records request is determined by the PRRC or records custodian to be so large that production of all of the requested records cannot be produced as copies at a single time, then the records may be produced in segments. The requestor shall be notified in writing when the next segment of the records is expected to be available. Written notice shall also be provided to the requestor if there is any change regarding the date of production. Costs for copies produced as part of such a rolling production schedule shall be paid as set out in these rules for the segment of the records produced and no additional records will be produced until payment has been made for the copies received.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.

0780-07-02-.08 FEES AND PAYMENTS.

- (1) General
 - (a) Fees and charges for copies of public records should not be used to hinder access to public records.
 - (b) Prior to producing copies of records, the records custodian shall provide the requestor with an estimate of the charges to be assessed for production and labor. The estimate shall include the job title, hourly rate, and time estimate for each of the individuals expected to be involved in producing the records. The records custodian shall not be required to identify the specific tasks to be performed by the individuals for the estimate or invoice.
 - (c) Waiver
 1. When the total costs of production, including the cost for copies, labor, and delivery, do not exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), the fees shall be waived, unless otherwise required by statute.
 2. Requests for fee waivers exceeding fifty dollars (\$50.00) or fee reductions shall be presented to the commissioner. Any waiver or reduction in fees is in the sole discretion of the commissioner, is not subject to judicial review, and does not establish any precedent.
 3. Fees associated with aggregated records requests shall not be waived unless the fees collectively amount to less than fifty dollars (\$50.00).
- (2) Production costs for copies are determined by the Schedule of Reasonable Charges established by the OORC.
 - (a) Other costs reasonably necessary to produce the records include, but are not limited to:
 1. Archive retrieval costs;
 2. Delivery cost of records;
 3. Computer programs; or
 4. If an outside vendor is used, the actual costs assessed by the vendor.

(Rule 0780-07-02-.08, continued)

(3) Labor Costs

- (a) The requestor shall pay labor costs for the production of copies at the hourly wage of the employee(s) reasonably necessary to produce the requested information after one (1) hour of work has been done by the employees in identifying, producing, reviewing, and redacting the requested material. The first hour of labor costs shall not be deducted for purposes of calculating fee waivers for costs that do not exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00).
- (b) The one (1) hour waiver applies to the highest paid employee. If the highest paid employee spends less than one (1) hour on the request, then the balance of the hour shall roll to the next highest paid employee involved in the request until one (1) full hour of credit has been given.

(4) Payment of Costs

- (a) Copies of records will not be released until such time as payment has been made, except as approved by the commissioner.
 - (b) Forms of payment include any form of payment accepted by the department at the time of any request. The department has the discretion to determine the acceptable forms of payment for costs.
 - (c) Checks must be made payable to the department and presented to the records custodian or PRRC.
- (5) Pursuant to T.C.A. § 10-7-503, if the department receives a request for copies of a public record and the requestor fails to pay to the department the cost for the production of such copies after copies have been produced, the department is not required to comply with any public records request from the requestor until payment for such copies has been received provided that the requestor was given an estimated cost for producing the copies prior to the production of the copies and agreed to pay the estimated cost for such copies.
- (6) If the costs for copies exceeds fifty dollars (\$50.00), the requestor shall pay the estimated amount in advance of processing and shall be invoiced for or refunded the difference between the estimated and actual costs, as appropriate.
- (7) If the records are to be produced as part of a rolling production as set out in Rule 0780-07-02-.07, then the costs for purposes of this paragraph shall be the costs of each segment of records. The requestor shall pay for each segment of records produced prior to the department being obligated to produce the next segment of records. If the costs for requested copies exceed fifty dollars (\$50.00), the requestor shall pay the estimated amount in advance and shall be invoiced for or refunded the difference of the estimated and actual costs, as appropriate.
- (8) Aggregation of Frequent and Multiple Requests
- (a) The department will aggregate record requests in accordance with the Frequent and Multiple Request Policy promulgated by the OORC when more than (4) requests are received within a calendar month either from a single individual or a group of individuals determined to be working in concert.
 - (b) Records requests will be aggregated at the department level.
 - (c) The PRRC is responsible for making the determination that a group of individuals is

(Rule 0780-07-02-.08, continued)

working in concert. The PRRC or the records custodian must inform the individuals that they have been deemed to be working in concert and that they have the right to appeal the decision to the OORC.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 10-7-501, et seq. **Administrative History:** Original rule filed October 23, 2020; effective January 21, 2021.