Records Management for Tax Assessor-Collectors

Local Government Record: any document, paper, letter, book, map, photograph, sound or video recording, microfilm, magnetic tape, electronic medium, or other information recording medium, regardless of physical form or characteristic and regardless of whether public access to it is open or restricted under the laws of the state, created or received by a local government or any of its officers or employee pursuant to law, including an ordinance, or in the transaction of public business.

Fast Track to Compliance:
1. Records Management Policy: http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/recordspubs/forms/pm1.pdf
2. Designation of RMO (SLR504): http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/recordspubs/forms/slr504.pdf
3. Schedule Adoption (SLR508): http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/recordspubs/forms/slr508.pdf

What are Essential Records?
Records are needed to:
1) Resume or continue operations (e.g., delegations of authority; rules, policies, and procedures; prison, jail, and parole records; maps and building plans; and Emergency and/or Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan)
2) Re-create legal and financial status (e.g., contracts and leases; accounts receivable/payable; insurance records; and payroll)
3) Protect and fulfill obligations to the people of the state (e.g., deeds, mortgages, and land records; birth and marriage records; active court proceedings; and voting records)

How to identify your Essential Records:
Factors to consider:
1) Your government's essential functions (e.g., provide vital services; exercise civil authority; maintain safety and well-being of general population; and sustain industrial economic base)
2) Your government's records (shows importance of good records management program; have current records inventories on file; and have an up-to-date records retention schedule)
3) Your stakeholders (Who depends on you? Who provides mission-critical support? What if you didn't have access to certain records for 24hrs? How long could you operate without these records?
4) Relevant statutes and regulations (Know laws that apply to your county's functionality)

Identify and Evaluate Hazards:
1) Expert interviews
2) Site survey (environmental; physical; personnel; information security; and preparedness)
3) Conduct a risk analysis (rate your risks, probability of occurrence, impact on records, and then evaluate the findings)
4) Prepare and mitigate (on-site protection; evacuation; back-up tapes; and data replication)
5) Prioritize access to records (Priority 1: First 0-12 hours; Priority 2: First 12-72 hours; Priority 3: After first 72 hours)

How to respond to a records emergency:
1) Assess the damage (determine nature and severity; document volume and extent; and identify records affected)
2) Determine response priorities (recover essential records and valuable records first)
3) Implement the response (1st priority: personal health and safety; 2nd priority: security and privacy)
4) Initial action steps (1. Cover materials, 2. Remove standing water, 3. Stabilize temperature and humidity, 4. Use fans to circulate air)

Electronic Records:
Electronic record: Information that meets the definition of a local government record, is maintained in electronic format and requires a computer or similar device to read the data, and includes the document's metadata (data about the data created)

Electronic Records can be located on PCs, hard drives, cell phones, laptops, remote sites, CDs, flash drives, other disc formats, servers, home offices, etc…

Bulletin B: Electronic Records Standards and Procedures, explains all standards and requirements for scanning and digitization, data maintenance, proper storage mediums, security measures, archiving, and acceptable destruction methods. See the top of page 1 for the website link to Bulletin B.

Emails:
What to keep?
1) Delete immediately: junk mail or personal email (no relevance to business), convenience copies
2) Is content related to your job? (If no, delete or forward. If yes, move to step 3)
3) Are you the custodian and designated person responsible for maintaining records related to that subject? (If no, delete or forward. If yes, keep the email)
Set up a file plan
1) Users can customize to work for them
2) Use retention schedule as a guideline
3) Establish naming conventions for folders and file names
4) 3 main categories: program records, correspondence, and management records (if applicable)

Scanning:
1) Nonproprietary image file header label
2) Density requirement (min. 200 dpi)
3) Scanner quality – ANSI/AIIM standards
4) File compression standards
5) System quality assurance

Before Destroying source document: verify quality assurance, no court ruling, no auditor requirement, no business need, no law or rule that mandates otherwise, and determine how to ensure the long-term preservation of those records (migration plan or consider archival quality microfilm)

References:
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Retention Schedules: http://www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/recordspubs/localretention.html
Find your government's analyst: www.tsl.state.tx.us/slrm/local/countylist.html