

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES USING AUTO-REDACTION TO PROTECT SENSITIVE RECORDS



Government Agencies Using Automated Redaction to Protect Sensitive Records

Redaction is the removal of confidential and private data from electronic records. Once complete, government agencies can safely release the documents to the public without disclosing information protected by privacy laws. Federal and state government agencies must have effective redaction processes in place to ensure they preserve identifiable information and comply with privacy laws. The public's desire for government transparency brought about the Freedom of Information Act or FOIA. The federal government enacted the FOIA in 1967, allowing the public to request access to all federal agency records.

In combination with privacy laws, records requests under the FOIA present many complex challenges government agencies must overcome. Protecting the privacy rights of individuals is not only a legal requirement but also essential for protecting the public's privacy. Redaction is also crucial for the integrity of cases and investigations. The needs of each agency can vary widely depending on the type of record and department releasing the documents. Implementing an efficient redaction solution can allow organizations to stay productive and efficient while keeping up with requests and redaction processes.

More About the Freedom of Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act is legislation that provides the public with the right to request access to government records from the Executive Branch of the U.S. Government. The agencies must disclose the information upon request unless the documents are exempt. Besides the forms on the exempt list, the agencies must provide the most significant potential disclosure while complying with privacy laws and regulations. Some records exempt from the Freedom of Information Act include the following:

- Documents regarding national security and foreign policy
- Organizational personnel rules and policies
- Trade secrets and financial records
- Financial institution supervisory and regulatory data
- Communications between federal agencies regarding policies
- Criminal records from law enforcement agencies
- Maps and other geological information
- Personally identifiable information regarding finances and healthcare

To ensure they comply with the privacy law guidelines, they must redact specific data that could cause harm to an individual or organization. The Freedom of Information Act works on behalf of the public and ensures federal government transparency. It requires the disclosure of specific

information and defines which documents are subject to disclosure. It also mandates data redaction to ensure national security and individual privacy.

Government Records Request Redaction Requirements

Unless the record is on the exempt list, government agencies must disclose documents upon request to the public. Before releasing the data, they must remove the private and identifiable information or face fines and backlash. Removing sensitive information from government records and court documents is a complex task. The agency must ensure the original data remains intact without releasing sensitive information. When the redaction processes are faulty, the data could be viewable or allow the public to see the redacted information.

The Common Redaction Errors

Most redaction errors occur when agencies use the incorrect method to redact electronic files. They could have redaction processes in place and unintentionally disclose confidential information. Some of the common redaction errors include:

Changing Font Color to White

It is a common misconception that changing text to white will permanently hide the individual or organization's private data. However, simply changing the font color is faulty, and someone without authorization may be able to change the font to a different color. This form of redaction also leaves the metadata, and the information can reveal the history of document edits disclosing private information.

Forgetting to Remove Metadata

Metadata is data providing information about the content regarding text and pictures of records. There are several types of metadata, and one of those is descriptive metadata, which could give unauthorized individuals information about the private information the agency hid on the viewable document. All electronic documents retain the metadata even when the data is not visible. Agencies must use redaction processes that hide the viewable information and hidden metadata before releasing the records to the public.

Using Adobe Acrobat Commenting Tools for Redaction

Using Adobe Acrobat commenting tools for redaction is also ineffective. While it may hide the visible text, an unauthorized person can remove the boxes to view the hidden data.

Manual Redaction

Manual redaction with white-out tape or a black marker and rescanning the records is not a full-proof redaction method. The text underneath the markings may be visible, leaving the agency vulnerable to human error.

What Qualifies as Personally Identifiable Information?

Whenever a person gives their legal name or other private data to a government agency, they trust that the organization will keep their information safe and confidential. Under the law, government agencies must safeguard the information or risk fines, civil lawsuits, and public backlash. Protected

personally identifiable information, or PII is the legal term for organizations' data to identify and contact people. Protected personally identifiable information includes their complete first name or even the first initial when the record shows the last name combined with other information such as a social security or passport number.

PII also includes phone numbers, social security numbers, and even email addresses if paired with additional identifiable information. The context of the data is also essential when evaluating PII. While the information may not be sensitive in one area, it could be private information the agency must protect in another. If a record contains data regarding medical care, it includes sensitive data the agency must hide from unauthorized viewers. However, it is not private information if it is a department employee contact list.

Types of Government Record Requests

The public has access to various types of government documents upon request. The general public, politicians, reporters, or journalists commonly request the records for many reasons. There are many examples of embarrassing and costly mistakes government organizations make involving releasing people's private data. Some of the more common government documents the public requests regularly include:

- Court and discovery records
- Uniform Commercial Code or UCC lien filings
- Records of purchases with credit card information
- Insurance forms and medical records
- Court case transcripts
- Freedom of Information Act requests

Many interactions with government agencies require them to provide documents and information to the requestor.

Federal Government Guidance on Redacting Personal Data Identifiers in Electronically Filed Documents

Redacting, also called sanitizing government records for private data, protects people's sensitive information. Many records are available for public view. When the information provided on the documents could cause financial harm or ruin their reputation, the agency must redact it from the public record. According to the directive of the [Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts](#), agencies must redact all personal data identifiers before filing them with the court or releasing them to the public. Personal data identifiers include the following:

- Social security and tax identification numbers, except for the last four digits if necessary
- Financial account numbers, except for the last four digits if needed
- Names of minor children

- Dates of birth
- Home addresses

Agencies must also use caution when they release records with proprietary or trade secret details, driver's license numbers, employment history, and medical records.

Manual Redaction Processes Require Unnecessary Time, Effort, and Money

Manual redaction is time-consuming, takes effort and more personnel, and leaves government agencies vulnerable to avoidable errors. The organizations have many records to redact before posting or releasing them to the public to fulfill requests. Automated redaction with the [iDox.ai](#) redaction tool speeds up the process by quickly and effectively identifying and redacting sensitive information.

At the same time, it frees up team member time to focus on other pressing tasks. Having proficient redaction software saves money on government employee hours and workforce. Instead of hiring a group to focus on redacting massive amounts of documents for public view, offices can depend on a reliable redaction tool. The software is automated, intuitive, and dependable.

Automate Government Agency Redaction Processes

Manual redaction processes are slow and costly. Government record requests are an everyday task, and the agencies must keep up to comply with the Freedom of Information Act guidelines. The work required to keep up with the requests can be overwhelming. That is especially true when the agencies use manual or inefficient redaction processes. Safeguarding people's private data is paramount to the security of government agencies. When agencies employ the use of practical AI technology redaction tools, they have the power to create quicker processing of requests while also ensuring compliance.

Secure AI Redaction Methods Keep Sensitive Data Safe

The need for reliable processes to keep private data confidential is a common struggle many agencies have faced in recent years. It is challenging to find systems that allow them to keep up with requests and remain productive while also maintaining security goals. An AI technology redaction solution is a powerful tool to help government agencies solve problems and reach their goals. The [iDox.ai](#) redaction software automatically searches and removes sensitive information from government records. The redaction tool is automatic and reliable to protect agencies from mistakenly sharing PII and other data.

The [iDox.ai](#) redaction tool will exclude sensitive information and ensure that government agencies comply with the Freedom of Information Act while meeting the various privacy law guidelines. The solution improves security and confidentiality, protects the organization from human error, and employees don't need to handle the redaction processes.

AI Redaction Processes Free Up Staff Hours for Other Essential Tasks

[iDox.ai](#) redaction automatically redacts confidential information before the agency shares or publishes the records. The redaction tool will free up staff hours and allow them to focus on other tasks. The benefits of the software include the following:

- Accuracy and security
- An intuitive and straightforward AI technology redaction process
- Compatible with various document formats and databases
- Cost-effective
- Automatic and dependable

The [iDox.ai](#) redaction solution allows agencies to automatically redact large amounts of documents rather than paying people to perform the tedious work. Further, it protects government organizations from inevitable human error.

AI Technology Provides an Accurate and Trustworthy Way to Redact Government Records

The [iDox.ai](#) redaction tool allows government organizations to empower their workforce. Governmental organizations have seen massive changes in digital record-keeping and securing private data in recent years. AI-powered software, including redaction tools, is changing the way organizations operate. The effective AI redaction tool is a dependable and straightforward approach to ensure agencies comply with privacy rules and regulations. The solution provides security, makes data more accessible for public information requests, and allows agencies to streamline redaction processes.

Automate Government Record Redaction Processes Today

Automated government record redaction is the paperless solution to address all challenges associated with flawed redaction systems. Government agencies can use [iDox.ai](#) to automatically redact all the necessary data and protect them from costly and embarrassing mistakes.

Compliance and privacy laws continue to expand, making finding reliable redaction processes more complex by the day. The powerful redaction tool will integrate with existing office databases.

Worldwide Privacy Regulations Continue to Expand, and Government Agencies Must Employ Dependable Automated Redaction Processes

Government agencies receive countless requests for records and information yearly. They are vulnerable to embarrassing and costly mistakes without finding dependable and effective redaction methods. [iDox.ai](#) helps government agencies to meet the significant demand of record requests while avoiding violations. The success of agencies in recent years with the constantly advancing technology depends significantly on proficient and trustworthy redaction methods.

Government agencies have the challenging task of ensuring transparency while also adhering to privacy laws. As the regulatory landscape continues to evolve, automating redaction processes is more crucial than ever. Government agencies and the public could sustain damages through privacy issue violations. It leaves individuals open to fraud and other crimes. Therefore, redaction rules protect all parties.

Automating redaction processes speeds up the process, allows workers to focus on other tasks, and protects agencies from human error. When government agencies utilize the advanced technology to automate document management and redaction processes, they will reduce manual labor and ensure compliance with regulations. The AI redaction tool will help organizations keep up with requests under the United States Freedom of Information Act while complying with the ever-evolving individual protection and privacy laws.