

NFPA® 232

Standard for the Protection of Records

2022 Edition



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An International Codes and Standards Organization

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NFPA® 232

Standard for the

Protection of Records

2022 Edition

This edition of NFPA 232, *Standard for the Protection of Records*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Record Protection. It was issued by the Standards Council on March 18, 2021, with an effective date of April 8, 2021, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 232 was approved as an American National Standard on April 8, 2021.

Origin and Development of NFPA 232

The destructive fire in the general offices of the Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railway in Chicago on March 25, 1922, was clear proof that valuable and often irreplaceable business records, unless properly protected, can be destroyed even in so-called “fire-resistive” buildings. Following that destructive fire, the Committee on Record Protection was organized. Reports were submitted annually from 1923 through 1936 and again in 1939. In 1947, a standard was developed from the officially adopted committee reports of 1942 to 1946. In 1960, the standard underwent major editorial revision and was revised again in 1963, when the title was changed from *Protection of Records* to *Standard for the Protection of Records*, 1967, and 1970. In 1975, the standard was reconfirmed. The 1980 edition reformatted the standard to conform to the *NFPA Manual of Style* and revised the detail specifications to performance-oriented requirements. The 1986 edition was a reconfirmation of the 1980 edition.

Changes to the 1991 edition included a reclassification of certain types of records. New provisions were added for the construction, arrangement, and protection of file rooms. These changes further increased the chance that vital documents would be spared during most fire events.

The 1995 edition incorporated several editorial changes and the inclusion of a retroactivity clause and further addressed the protection requirements for non-paper records media.

The 2000 edition incorporated NFPA 232A; where appropriate, the information that had been contained in NFPA 232A was included as enforceable language. The documents were combined because both contained similar information. Requirements for housekeeping and emergency planning were included to provide guidance during emergency conditions and recovery operations.

In addition to being reformatted in accordance with the *Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents*, the 2007 edition of NFPA 232 was reorganized to clearly provide requirements for each storage environment and to consolidate general requirements. Considerable effort was made to provide requirements for compartmented records centers.

In the 2012 edition, unenforceable language was removed, and several editorial changes were incorporated. The term *authorized* was defined and substituted for the term *approved* throughout the document. Protection against exposure fire was collaborated among all chapters and clarified in Chapter 4. Chapter 7 was revised in its entirety, clarifying archive protection.

Guidance regarding storage of electronic media was added to the 2017 edition, including a clear reference to NFPA 75, *Standard for the Fire Protection of Information Technology Equipment*. Record definitions were organized into subcategories addressing record medium, record type, and record status. The term *fire resistance* was replaced with *fire resistance rating* throughout the document.

For the 2022 edition, Table 4.1.1 has been updated to reflect changes for allowable storage environments. Additionally, the extracted definition, 3.3.9 Information Technology Equipment (ITE), has been updated to reflect changes in *NFPA 70, National Electrical Code*. Finally, both Chapter 2 (Referenced Publications) and Annex F (Informational References) have been updated to reflect revisions to various documents.

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NOTE: Membership on a committee shall not in and of itself constitute an endorsement of the Association or any document developed by the committee on which the member serves.

Committee Scope: This Committee shall have primary responsibility for documents on the protection of books, papers, plans, and other records from loss incident to fire.

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