

A Local Registrar's Guide to interacting with the Office of the Secretary of State

In 2011, the Texas Legislature, through House Bill 174, amended section 16.001(a) of the Texas Election Code to require the local registrar of death to submit an abstract of death to the Secretary of State in addition to the voter registrar of the decedent's county of residence no later than the 10th day following the month in which the abstract is prepared. The 2013 Texas Legislature, through Senate Bill 910, further amended this portion of the Election Code by adding Section (e), which requires that this information be submitted to the Secretary of State in an electronic manner.

It should be noted that a county may submit an Abstract of Death Electronic Filing Waiver Request to the Secretary of State, and if approved, continue to file this information in physical copy by mail or by fax. See **Appendix A** for a sample of the Waiver.

In light of this, the Secretary of State and the Vital Statistics Unit of the Department of State Health Services have combined efforts in order to ensure compliance with the law while minimizing the impact on local registrars of death. This guide is meant to serve as an instructional tool for how to submit the information to the Office of the Secretary of State.

First of all, it is important to note that the Secretary of State's office does not require an officially certified copy of an abstract of death; rather, the Secretary of State the requirement to submit an abstract of death as requiring as a summary or statement of the contents of the document. As such, the submission of electronic abstracts requires that a defined set of information provided on a certified abstract be included in the file sent to the Secretary of State.

The Vital Statistics Unit has worked with the Secretary of State in order to develop an ad hoc report that can be downloaded and submitted for all registrars using the TER system. Please see the attached instructions for running and saving this ad hoc report. For questions regarding these instructions, you may contact the Vital Statistics Unit.

Be sure to save the file as your county number and registrar position as well as the month and year for which you are reporting. In other words, Anderson County, Registrar 1, reporting for September should save the file as 00101_092013.

Once you have saved the report to be filed, you will need to send that file to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State's office accepts file transfers with an FTP site that is referred to as the County Data Website (CDW). It is important to note that the County Data Website **only** accepts files in a pre-determined file format.

If the file format does not match the record layout, as provided in Appendix B, then the file will not be accepted.

NOTE: At the time of this implementation, the Office of the Secretary of State is working to provide an enhanced interface for the County Data Website. Once complete, the Local Registrars of Death will have their own drop down file for reporting purposes and an updated information sheet will be sent out. Until then, please use the miscellaneous selection as your file type submission.

The steps for uploading the Local Registrar of Death Reporting file are as follows:

Step 1: Go to the County Data Website

Step 2: Enter your User ID and Password

Step 3: Select “Send Files”

Step 4: Click “Submit”

You will be directed to the “File Upload” page.

Step 5: Choose the file type of Miscellaneous from the “Select File Type:” drop down menu

Step 6: Click on the “Browse button” and locate the file

User Id: Enter your User ID

Password: Enter your Password

Select Transfer Type:

Receive Files

Send Files

No Updating Activity

Request Plan Export

Select File Type:

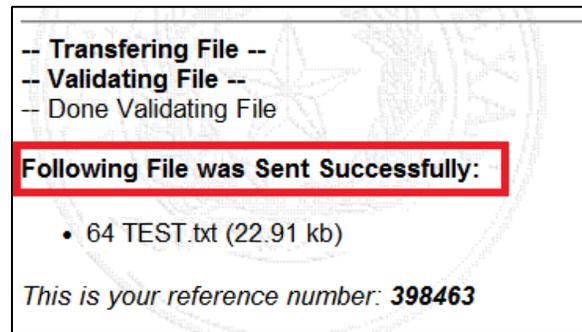
Miscellaneous

File to Upload: Browse...

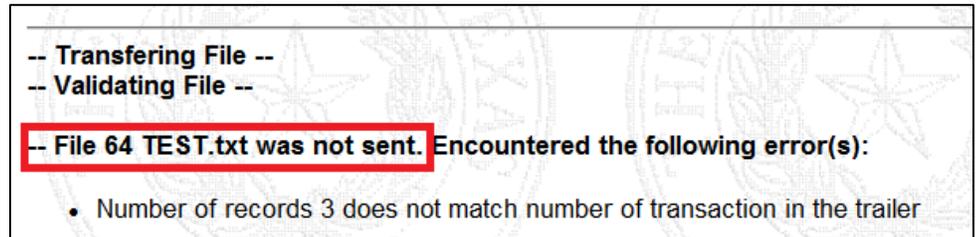
Step 7: Once the file has been selected, click on the “Send File” button.

File to Upload: Browse...

If your file is successfully submitted, you will receive a message indicating the file was sent successfully. This message will include a reference number. We would recommend you keep that number for your records.



If there is a problem with the file, however, you will receive an error message, along with a message indicating the reason the submission failed.



NOTE: As a reminder, you will receive an updated copy of this via email once the new County Data Website has been implemented.

Frequently Asked Questions

Question: I am having problems downloading the ad hoc report from TER. Who do I contact?

Answer: Please contact the Vital Statistics Unit for assistance in downloading the file. Should you then need additional assistance to upload the file to the Secretary of State's County Data Website, please email: elections@sos.state.tx.us or call: (800) 252-2216, option1.

Question: I do not have any decedents to report for this month, do I need to send a notification to the Secretary of State?

Answer: Yes. You should submit a blank file with the Secretary of State by the 10th day of the month.

Question: If I do not file a report because I do not have anything to file, then will the Secretary of State penalize me?

Answer: No. Periodically, the Secretary of State's office will evaluate information being submitted to their office. If no new information is sent from a county within a six month time period, then the Secretary of State's office may contact you to ascertain whether or not you are having problems reporting the information.

Question: I filed for a waiver from electronic reporting and have not yet heard back from the Secretary of State. My monthly filing is due. How should I proceed?

Answer: File the current month manually (via mail or fax). If you have previously obtained a waiver for reporting and have filed for a new one year period, contact the Secretary of State's office regarding the status of your waiver request.

Question: I have been granted a waiver from filing electronically; in what format should I submit this information to the Secretary of State?

Answer: You may submit this information in a single spreadsheet or typed document, as long as it includes the information identified in the Record Layout found in Appendix B.

Question: I just started using the TER system, can I begin reporting electronically?

Answer: Yes. Submit the request to begin reporting electronically to:
Office of Secretary of State
C/o: Voter Registration (Registrar of Death)
P.O. Box 12060
Austin, TX 78711-2060

You will be supplied with a User ID and Password in order to submit your files to the Secretary of State.

Question: Can I use the same format for reporting the information to the Secretary of State's office for reporting to the county voter registrar?

Answer: We would encourage you to work with the local voter registrar prior to changing the manner in which you report to them. In order for the information to be useful, it is important to coordinate with the local voter registrar to be sure the information is provided in a method suitable to their operation.

Question: I have questions not covered in this document, who do I contact?

Answer: Send an email to elections@sos.state.tx.us in order to have the appropriate person respond. If you would like to speak with someone in person, please call a member of the Voter Registration Section at: (800) 252-2216, option 1.

APPENDIX B

Record Layout for Filing Electronically through the County Data Website:

Col	Name	Type	Len	Format	Valid Values	Req for Daily
1	Date of Birth	DATE	10	MM/DD/YYYY		Required
2	Date of Death	DATE	10	MM/DD/YYYY		Required
3	First Name	CHAR	40	X(40)		Required
4	Last Name	CHAR	40	X(40)		Required
5	Former Last Name	CHAR	40	X(40)		Optional
6	Middle Name	CHAR	40	X(40)		Optional
7	Suffix	CHAR	10	X(10)		Optional
8	Gender	CHAR	6	X(6)	Male or Female	Optional
9	SSN	CHAR	11	XXX-XX-XXXX	4 or 9 digits	Required

NOTE: Files should be submitted as comma delimited files. Files may be created in an Excel Spreadsheet and saved in a CSV format.