

Maine Revised Statutes
Title 1: GENERAL PROVISIONS
Chapter 13: PUBLIC RECORDS AND PROCEEDINGS

§408-A. PUBLIC RECORDS AVAILABLE FOR INSPECTION AND COPYING

Except as otherwise provided by statute, a person has the right to inspect and copy any public record in accordance with this section within a reasonable time of making the request to inspect or copy the public record. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW).]

1. Inspect. A person may inspect any public record during reasonable office hours. An agency or official may not charge a fee for inspection unless the public record cannot be inspected without being converted or compiled, in which case the agency or official may charge a fee as provided in subsection 8.

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

2. Copy. A person may copy a public record in the office of the agency or official having custody of the public record during reasonable office hours or may request that the agency or official having custody of the record provide a copy. The agency or official may charge a fee for copies as provided in subsection 8.

A. A request need not be made in person or in writing. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

B. The agency or official shall mail the copy upon request. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

3. Acknowledgment; clarification; time estimate; cost estimate. The agency or official having custody or control of a public record shall acknowledge receipt of a request made according to this section within 5 working days of receiving the request and may request clarification concerning which public record or public records are being requested. Within a reasonable time of receiving the request, the agency or official shall provide a good faith, nonbinding estimate of the time within which the agency or official will comply with the request, as well as a cost estimate as provided in subsection 9. The agency or official shall make a good faith effort to fully respond to the request within the estimated time.

[2013, c. 350, §1 (AMD) .]

4. Refusals; denials. If a body or an agency or official having custody or control of any public record refuses permission to inspect or copy or abstract a public record, the body or agency or official shall provide written notice of the denial, stating the reason for the denial, within 5 working days of the receipt of the request for inspection or copying. Failure to comply with this subsection is considered failure to allow inspection or copying and is subject to appeal as provided in section 409.

[2013, c. 350, §2 (AMD) .]

5. Schedule. Inspection, conversion pursuant to subsection 7 and copying of a public record subject to a request under this section may be scheduled to occur at a time that will not delay or inconvenience the regular activities of the agency or official having custody or control of the public record requested. If the agency or official does not have regular office hours, the name and telephone number of a contact person authorized to provide access to the agency's or official's records must be posted in a conspicuous public place and at the office of the agency or official, if an office exists.

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

6. No requirement to create new record. An agency or official is not required to create a record that does not exist.

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

7. Electronically stored public records. An agency or official having custody or control of a public record subject to a request under this section shall provide access to an electronically stored public record either as a printed document of the public record or in the medium in which the record is stored, at the requester's option, except that the agency or official is not required to provide access to an electronically stored public record as a computer file if the agency or official does not have the ability to separate or prevent the disclosure of confidential information contained in or associated with that file.

A. If in order to provide access to an electronically stored public record the agency or official converts the record into a form susceptible of visual or aural comprehension or into a usable format for inspection or copying, the agency or official may charge a fee to cover the cost of conversion as provided in subsection 8. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

B. This subsection does not require an agency or official to provide a requester with access to a computer terminal. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

8. Payment of costs. Except as otherwise specifically provided by law or court order, an agency or official having custody of a public record may charge fees for public records as follows.

A. The agency or official may charge a reasonable fee to cover the cost of copying. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

B. The agency or official may charge a fee to cover the actual cost of searching for, retrieving and compiling the requested public record of not more than \$15 per hour after the first hour of staff time per request. Compiling the public record includes reviewing and redacting confidential information. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

C. The agency or official may charge for the actual cost to convert a public record into a form susceptible of visual or aural comprehension or into a usable format. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

D. An agency or official may not charge for inspection unless the public record cannot be inspected without being compiled or converted, in which case paragraph B or C applies. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

E. The agency or official may charge for the actual mailing costs to mail a copy of a record. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

9. Estimate. The agency or official having custody or control of a public record subject to a request under this section shall provide to the requester an estimate of the time necessary to complete the request and of the total cost as provided by subsection 8. If the estimate of the total cost is greater than \$30, the agency or official shall inform the requester before proceeding. If the estimate of the total cost is greater than \$100, subsection 10 applies.

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

10. Payment in advance. The agency or official having custody or control of a public record subject to a request under this section may require a requester to pay all or a portion of the estimated costs to complete the request prior to the search, retrieval, compiling, conversion and copying of the public record if:

A. The estimated total cost exceeds \$100; or [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

B. The requester has previously failed to pay a properly assessed fee under this chapter in a timely manner. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW).]

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

11. Waivers. The agency or official having custody or control of a public record subject to a request under this section may waive part or all of the total fee charged pursuant to subsection 8 if:

A. The requester is indigent; or [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW).]

B. The agency or official considers release of the public record requested to be in the public interest because doing so is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding of the operations or activities of government and is not primarily in the commercial interest of the requester. [2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW).]

[2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW) .]

SECTION HISTORY

2011, c. 662, §5 (NEW). 2013, c. 350, §§1, 2 (AMD).

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