REDACTION

Redaction Defined
Redaction is the task of rendering passages in a document illegible because those passages are confidential or otherwise exempt from disclosure. The process to redact passages from a printed document is to obscure the text or images with a dark permanent marker. Persons performing the redaction are cautioned to always perform redactions on a **copy** of the document (never redact the original), make sure the redacted passages are completely obscured (that no portion of the text can be seen that might allow an astute observer to infer the underlying content), and verify that the ink from the marker used is sufficient to obscure the passages even when the document is held up to a bright back-light or placed under magnification (this can often be assured by photocopying the marker-redacted copy).

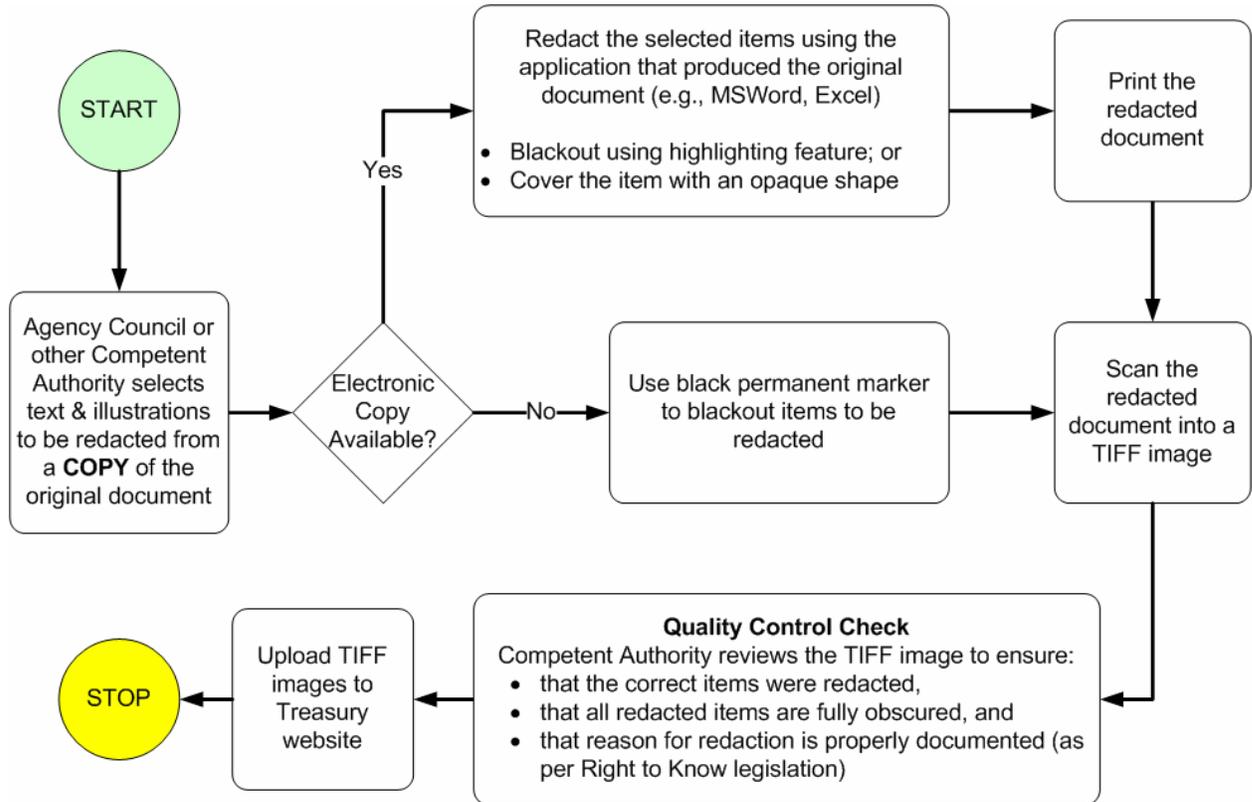Challenges Faced With Redaction
With the advent of electronic documents (e-documents), such as from word processers and email, additional concerns and an alternative method of redaction have emerged. E-documents may be printed and manually redacted with a dark permanent marker, just like any other printed document; but significant time savings and easy error correction (due to the handy undo button) can be realized by performing the redaction using tools within the document's source application. For instance, .pdf documents can be redacted in Adobe Acrobat and .doc documents can be redacted in MS Word by obscuring the passages with the highlighter feature set to an opaque color (black) or by covering with an opaque shape (square or circle). Keeping the document in electronic format also simplifies the task of sending it to the recipient (email, FTP, or compacted onto a CD). The risk inherent in this process, however, is that other applications or the same application used to create the document can be used to "peel off" the redaction layer and reveal the otherwise obscured passage.

A second concern with keeping the document in its native format is that all the envelope information (original author, creation date, last edit date, etc.) is embedded in the document. This "metadata" may be of a sensitive nature or even in error (such as when another similarly constructed document was used as the original template). The envelope metadata is therefore NOT to be included in the redacted version.

OA Recommended Redaction Process
The common simplest and most reliable way to alleviate each of these concerns is to print the redacted version of the document. The printed version of the document contains no metadata and provides no means whatsoever to peel off the redaction layer. To keep the document in electronic format, the printed copy is to be scanned into .tif format. It is permissible to scan the document into .pdf format; but for contracts loaded to the Treasury website, all .pdf's (and .pdf's only) are scanned for searchability as part of the upload process. This searchability scan has been known to generate time-out errors when applied to documents that had been scanned into .pdf format before uploading. For this

reason, OA is recommending that contracts all be scanned into .tif format prior to uploading to Treasury.

The flowchart:

START → Agency Council or other Competent Authority selects text & illustrations to be redacted from a **COPY** of the original document → Electronic Copy Available?

Yes → Redact the selected items using the application that produced the original document (e.g., MSWord, Excel)
- Blackout using highlighting feature; or
- Cover the item with an opaque shape
→ Print the redacted document → Scan the redacted document into a TIFF image

No → Use black permanent marker to blackout items to be redacted → Scan the redacted document into a TIFF image

Scan the redacted document into a TIFF image → **Quality Control Check** Competent Authority reviews the TIFF image to ensure:
- that the correct items were redacted,
- that all redacted items are fully obscured, and
- that reason for redaction is properly documented (as per Right to Know legislation)
→ Upload TIFF images to Treasury website → STOP

New Technologies

Technologies exist that can simplify finding the passages to be redacted through rules-based search engines developed specifically for this purpose. Technologies also exist that strip the envelope metadata from an e-document and save it in a format which cannot be un-redacted. OA/OIT is currently investigating these technologies and will be establishing a Commonwealth standard in the near future. Agencies are to refrain from purchasing, developing or implementing such software until this standard is named.