

**Whatcom County  
Auditor's Office**

Whatcom County Courthouse  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038



**Debbie Adelstein**  
County Auditor

**Diana Bradrick**  
Chief Deputy Auditor

**Phone:** (360) 676-6740

**Fax:** (360) 738-4556

**Email:** [auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us)

**Internet:** [www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor](http://www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor)

## Memorandum

**Date:** May 11, 2015  
**To:** Recording Customers  
**From:** Stacy Henthorn, Recording/Licensing Supervisor  
**Re:** Document Legibility

The goal of imaging a recorded document is to historically preserve the document in order to reproduce a copy that can be relied on at a later date. There is no purpose in preserving a document that is illegible at the time of recording because the text, seals, drawings, signatures, or other content within the document cannot be interpreted correctly. It is important to note that legibility is defined as the ability to reproduce a copy that can be read, not the ability to make out the text on the original document.

Legibility requirements are mandated by Washington State Law as a protection to those who need to rely on the content of the document once it's recorded. Our goal is to increase awareness of these mandated requirements and improve the quality of images stored without causing unnecessary rejection of documents submitted for recording. The statutes pertaining to legibility are listed below:

RCW 65.04.15 (6) "Legible and capable of being imaged means all text, seals, drawings, signatures, or other content within the document must be legible and capable of producing a readable image, regardless of what process is used for recording."

RCW 65.04.045(2) "(2) All pages of the document shall be on sheets of paper of a weight and color capable of producing a legible image that are not larger than fourteen inches long and eight and one-half inches wide with text printed or written in eight point type or larger. All text within the document must be of sufficient color and clarity to ensure that when the text is imaged all text is readable. Further, all pages presented for recording must have at minimum a one-inch margin on the top, bottom, and sides for all pages except page one, except that an instrument may be recorded if a minor portion of a notary seal, incidental writing, or minor portion of a signature extends beyond the margins, be prepared in ink color capable of being imaged, and have all seals legible and capable of being imaged. No attachments, except firmly attached bar code or address labels, may be affixed to the pages."

RCW 65.04.048 (1) "Documents which do not meet legibility requirements must not be recorded as a nonstandard recording."