



# Redacting Private Information in PII Documents

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## Redacting Documents

When sharing documents containing confidential information it is of the utmost importance that the information is safely removed from the document, redacted. This assists in maintaining confidentiality of beneficiary information.

### What NOT to do

The following “redact” methods are easily altered and can easily allow someone access to private information. These methods do not ensure the maintenance of confidentiality.

- Covering confidential information with text boxes
- Changing the background color to match the font color
- Highlighting the information in black highlight on the computer
- Using a black marker to mark out the information
- Deleting the information without taking additional steps

## Recommended Practices

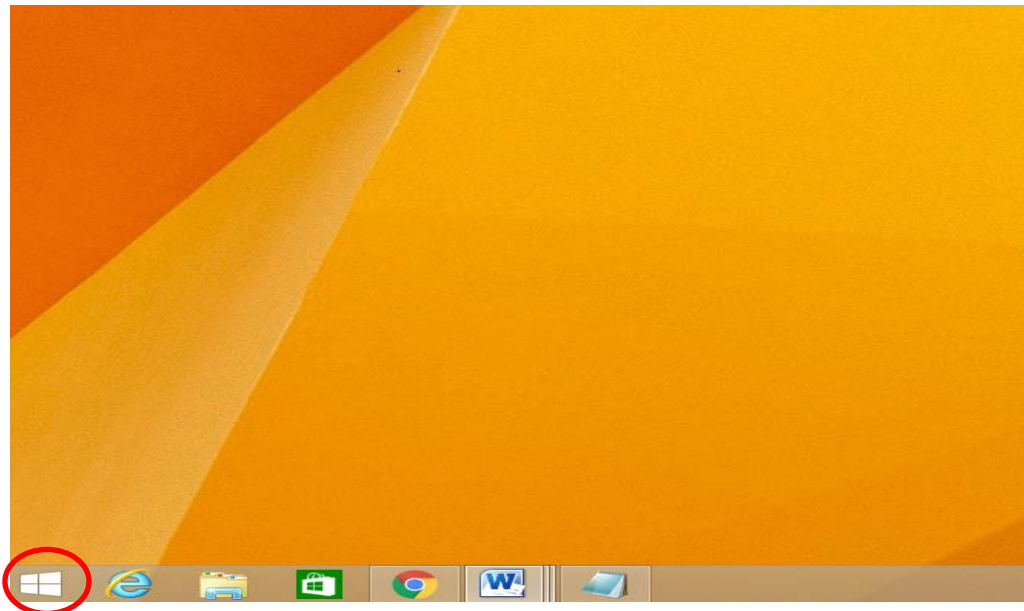
The following methods will assist in preventing private information from being accessed or viewed when submitting PII documents.

- The Notepad Method
- Deleting text and removing metadata in Microsoft Word
- Cutting out the information or covering information with tape or paper
- Use the Redact tool in Adobe Pro

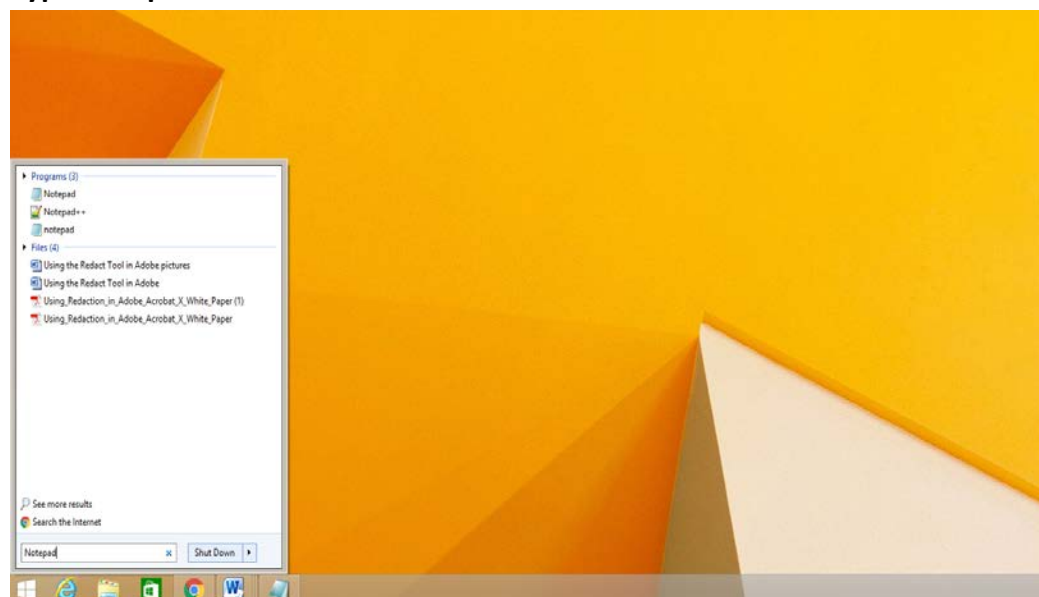
## Notepad Method

\*Note using this method removes all formatting. Formatting will need to be redone before completion.

1. **Save** an original copy of your document to avoid losing data
2. **Delete** or replace all private information within the document
3. **Copy all** the text by selecting **CTRL+A**
4. **Paste** the text into Notepad
  - a. Click the **Office** icon



- b. **Type Notepad** into the search bar



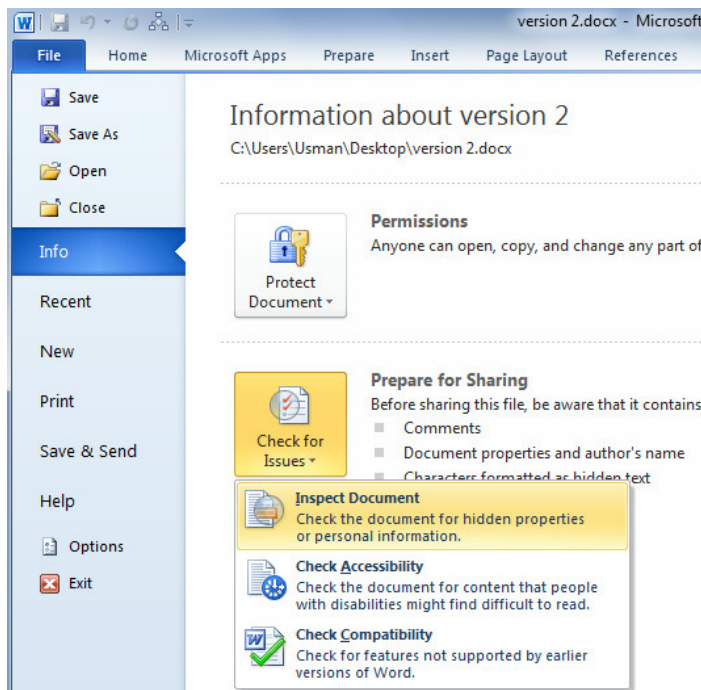
### c. Select Notepad

5. **Save** the Notepad file
6. **Open** the file in the desired software for example Microsoft Word
7. **Reformat** the text
8. **Save** the new document
9. **Convert** to a PDF if desired

## Remove Metadata in Microsoft Word

Metadata is information that is retained in a document. This includes any revisions that have been made to the document. This information can be recovered and the information can be retrieved. To prevent this it is important to remove metadata to conceal confidential information in Word documents.

1. **Open** your file in Microsoft Word
2. **Save** an original copy of your document to avoid losing data
3. **Delete** or replace all private information within the document
4. Select the **File** tab
5. Select **Info**



6. Select **Check for Issues**
7. Click **Inspect Document**
8. Click **Remove All** in all areas that the Inspector finds metadata

9. Select **Save As** and label this file as desired to note the changes
10. **Convert** to PDF if desired

### **Cut out information or Tape/Cover Private Information**

If using tape or paper it must be 100% opaque. This means that light cannot penetrate through the tape or paper. This prevents the information from being revealed in the scanning process.

1. **Print** out the document
2. Physically **cut out** all private information **or use 100% opaque tape or paper(impenetrable by light) to cover** the private information
3. **Scan** the document into the computer
4. **Review** the document on the computer. Make sure no text or information can be seen. If it can the tape or paper is not 100% opaque.
5. If nothing can be seen, **save** the document as a PDF

### **Use the Redact Tool in Adobe Pro Versions**

**This method will not work for those using government issued laptops. Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWIC) working at Work Incentive Planning and Assistance projects may not use this method. Please use one of the other options. Government issued laptops only have access to Adobe Reader. CWICs must use their government issued laptops when handling any PII.**

This method requires the document to be opened with Adobe Pro. Depending on what version of Adobe Pro the instructions may differentiate slightly. These instructions were created using Adobe Pro DC.

1. Select **Tools** then **Redact**
2. Select **Mark for Redaction** then **Text and Images**
3. Use one of the three ways to select the private information:
  - a. **Double-click** to select a word or image
  - b. **Click and drag** to select a line of text or area
  - c. Press **CTRL** and drag the cursor to select a large area
4. When finished select **Apply** and then click **OK** – the item will NOT be redacted until the document is saved
5. If removing hidden information is desired click **Yes**, if not click **No**
6. **Save** the document as a new file

## **Additional Information**

Please note these are merely suggestions. VCU NDTC Staff are not experts on redacting or sanitizing file metadata. Please contact Mary McAdam with any questions or concerns at [mmcadam@vcu.edu](mailto:mmcadam@vcu.edu) or (804)-827-2884. For more information visit the links below:

[USA District Court Eastern District of California Redact Methods](#)

[Guidance on Redacting Electronic Files](#)