

Media Shipping & Storage

For those of you not on major labels, it is important that prior to and subsequent to your mastering session that you keep your original masters in good condition. To do this there are several easy steps that you can take to insure that your masters arrive in excellent shape and stay that way long after the session. These recommendations apply to both digital and analog tape media. For more thorough and detailed information on media storage issues click on the following link to the national archives: www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub54

Store tapes "tails" out. This means that the tape has been played through to the end and not rewound.

Play tapes or "library wind" tapes to the end prior to storage. Fast-forwarding will pack the tape unevenly and leave the outer edges of the tape vulnerable to damage.

Keep tapes away from electromagnetic fields. That means keep them away from speakers & speaker cabinets which typically contain powerful magnets ! If possible label any shipping containers with a warning that magnetically sensitive material is enclosed.

Do not expose tapes to direct sunlight.

Do not drop tapes. This can loosen or shift the pack and expose the tape surface to the elements.

Store and ship tapes on end. This prevents the tape-pack from shifting due to gravity or vibration.

Keep tapes in a humidity and climate controlled environment. The National Archive recommends a temperature range of 40F- 70F and a relative humidity (rh) range of 25% - 55% for optimum playability. Tapes stored under these conditions will last approximately 10 years. For long-term storage and archiving, a temperature range of 40F - 64F with a relative humidity between 20% & 40% is recommended. Tapes stored under these conditions should last 50+ years. It is important to note that the temperature and humidity ranges need to be relatively constant with a temperature variance of no more than 7F, and, a relative humidity variance of no more than 10%. If your tapes are shipped outside of these conditions, environmental acclimation is required. That is, if you are shipping your tapes during the winter or summer months, 1/4" and 1/2" tapes require one hour to acclimate for temperature and one full day to acclimate for relative humidity. Sony 1630 U-Matic tapes require four hours to acclimate for temperature and eight days to acclimate to relative humidity. DAT, ADAT, Exabyte and DA-88 tapes, like U-Matic tapes, also require longer to acclimate. Therefore, we ask that tapes arrive at least one day ahead of the scheduled mastering date, especially during the winter and summer months. If the session is from archival material, we like to have the tapes one week ahead of the scheduled mastering date.

Relative to the previous paragraph on storage, if you are shipping your tapes to the session, try not to ship over a weekend. Generally this means that your tapes will be sitting in a container on a loading dock or parking lot for this period of time. During the extreme cold of winter and the heat of summer, your tapes could be exposed to undesirable temperatures and humidity conditions. We recommend shipping your tapes via overnight courier Monday through Thursday.

For CDR and Magneto Optical media, even though they are less sensitive than tape, the same conditions are recommended. Obviously, protecting the media from scratches, fingerprints, and dust should be a priority.

Keep tapes away from smoke and other airborne contaminants.

For those of you traveling with or shipping tapes, the common practice of wrapping tapes in aluminum foil is of no use. Walk through x-rays and metal detectors at airports are no threat to your tapes. However, the hand-held metal detectors are a threat to your tapes. If you are going to be "wanded" at an airport security checkpoint, ask to remove the tapes and have them hand inspected. The only airport scanners that are potentially dangerous to your tapes are the new post-9/11 luggage scanners found in all major US and European airports. These detectors do emit a strong enough magnetic field to partially erase tapes. Therefore, when shipping tapes from or to overseas, always pack the tapes with 2" or more of nonmagnetic packing material around all sides. This amount of space should be enough to prevent any accidental erasure.

Most importantly, always make a safety copy of your masters prior to shipping! It is rare, but has happened, that masters

have been lost or partially erased during shipment to our facility. Don't be caught without a backup in those situations. Better yet, if you have the capability to run two simultaneous masters when printing your mixes, do so. This saves a generation.