

Judge Told Nixon Tapes Could Self-Destruct

Washington

The U.S. archivist has told a federal judge that former President Nixon's tapes and documents may self-destruct unless they are moved to a vault with temperature and humidity controls.

The 42 million pages of documents and 920 tape reels are packed in the/ are packed in the Old Executive Office building, where they were placed "temporarily" pending shipment to the former President in August, 1974, Archivist James B. Rhoads said this week.

"It is my considered professional opinion that the " persistence of this condition increasingly threatens physical preservation of these

historical materials," Rhoads said in an affidavit.

The Justice Department filed the affidavit with a motion that U.S. District Judge Aubrey E. Robinson Jr. allow them to be transferred to one of the "security classified vaults" in the National Records Center.

"The weight of boxes strapped on pallets crushes the boxes on the bottom ... and tape recordings that have not been rewound in so long a period are in danger of deterioration," Rhoads said.

Stan Mortenson, one of Mr. Nixon's attorneys, said they have not decided whether they will oppose removal to the archive's vault.

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