



**Frequently Asked Questions  
About Retention and Disposal Schedules  
(local government)**

**Q: What is a Retention and Disposal Schedule?**

**A:** Retention and Disposal Schedules are comprehensive inventories of all public records maintained by a government agency, regardless of the record's format or storage location. They identify how long public records must be retained by an agency. Retention periods are based on federal statutes and regulations, state and local requirements, and the agency's fiscal and administrative needs. General Schedules for local governments are available [online](#).

**Q: Why do I have to follow a Retention and Disposal Schedule?**

**A:** According to [Michigan law](#), public records cannot be destroyed without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. This law exists to prevent the destruction of public information as a result of the opinion of a single individual.

**Q: How are schedules developed?**

**A:** Local governments submit proposed Retention and Disposal Schedules to Records Management Services for review and approval routing. Schedules are reviewed and approved by the creating agency, Records Management Services, Archives of Michigan, and the State Administrative Board.

**Q: Who is responsible for records retention?**

**A:** Every employee who creates, receives, or maintains public records is responsible for records retention. Government agencies need to identify the "office of record" when multiple offices possess copies of the same record. The "office of record" is responsible for following the retention period that is specified, duplicates do not need to be retained.

**Q: What is a General Schedule?**

**A:** General schedules cover records that are common to a particular government function, such as financial records. General schedules promote consistent retention practices and prevent individual agencies from needing to have an agency-specific schedule to cover the records. General schedules are [available online](#).

**Q: What is an Agency-Specific Schedule?**

**A:** Agency-Specific Schedules cover records that are unique to a particular government agency and supplement the General Schedules. Local governments can contact Records Management Services at [recordscenter@michigan.gov](mailto:recordscenter@michigan.gov) to request copies of approved agency-specific schedules.



**Q: What is a non-record?**

**A:** Not all recorded information is a record. Examples of non-records include extra copies of documents, drafts, courtesy copies, routing slips, publications received from outside sources, and other materials that are not essential to the operation of the agency. In accordance with [General Schedule #1](#), non-records may be destroyed when “no longer needed for reference purposes.”

**Q: Do schedules apply to electronic records?**

**A:** Yes. Electronic records (email messages, digital images, databases, etc.) are considered public records if they are created or received as part of performing a public employee’s official duties. Electronic records must be evaluated for their content and purpose to determine the length of time they must be retained in accordance with the appropriate schedule.

**Q: Do schedules apply to records stored off-site, such as at a document storage vendor or in vendor-hosted cloud storage?**

**A:** Yes. The retention period for all records is governed by schedules regardless of where the records are stored. The records are property of the agency even if they are maintained by a service provider. It is the agency’s responsibility to ensure their records are retained in compliance with schedules.

**Q: What are the benefits of Retention and Disposal Schedule compliance?**

**A:** Compliance with schedules reduces costs and legal liabilities. There are risks associated with keeping records too long: they waste space, they make it harder to find records you need, and the records must be reviewed for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), and litigation requests. There are also risks associated with destroying records too soon: it is a violation of Michigan law, and it exposes the agency to liability if the records are requested via FOIA or litigation and they cannot be produced.