

Email is a Record

Email is a tool that is used to exchange messages and documents using telecommunications equipment and computers. Email messages are **public records** if they document a public employee's official duties.

Michigan law requires that all public records, regardless of format, be listed on an approved **Retention and Disposal Schedule** that identifies how long the records must be kept, when they may be destroyed and when certain records can be sent to the Archives of Michigan for permanent preservation. Records cannot be destroyed unless their disposal is authorized by an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Just like paper records, email records are used to support a variety of business processes. There is not a single retention period for email. Each message must be evaluated for its content and purpose to determine the length of time it must be retained in accordance with the appropriate Retention and Disposal Schedule. Just like paper records, email messages may be **evidence** of decisions and activities. Both senders and recipients of email messages must determine if a particular message should be retained to document their role in agency activities.

Visit Records Management Services online at inside.michigan.gov. Go to the *For Your Job* menu, and select *Records Management*.



State of Michigan
Records Management Services
3400 N. Grand River Ave.
Lansing, Michigan 48909
517-335-9132

Records Management Services



Effective Solutions for Managing Email

Email Management

Records Management Services published several tools to educate Michigan government employees about their responsibilities for properly managing email. These tools help employees comply with record retention laws, effectively organize and locate their email and related records, protect their agency from adverse consequences associated with Freedom of Information Act requests and litigation, and improve their business processes.

Email Training

Two online classes explain how to manage and maintain email. Each class takes about 15 minutes to complete.

Email Guidance

This guide defines four categories of email: official records, transitory records, non-records, and personal records. It explains how long to keep records for each category, as well as who is responsible for retention.

Email Management FAQs

This guide addresses the basic facts that each employee should know about managing email.

Email Retention Decision Tree

This flow chart helps employees figure out if they should keep or delete specific email messages.

Model Email Management Policy

Each department or agency should adopt a policy that notifies employees about their responsibilities for retaining official email records, and identifies how email should be stored. This fill-in-the-blank model policy serves as a template for agencies to follow. Management, information technology staff, and attorneys should work together to finalize a policy that addresses technology resources and legal vulnerabilities.

All of these educational tools are available online at: inside.michigan.gov. Go to the *For Your Job* menu and select *Records Management*.

