



Tips: Electronic Records Management

Electronic records include documents and data in electronic formats. Like all other government records, electronic records that document the official activities of government agencies must be retained in compliance with approved [Retention and Disposal Schedules](#). Schedules identify how long the records must be kept, and when records may be destroyed or sent to the [Archives of Michigan](#) for permanent preservation. Records that are not listed on a schedule cannot be legally destroyed.

Retention and Disposal Schedules Cover All Records

Retention and Disposal Schedules apply to **all** records regardless of the

- **Tool** used to create the records (Microsoft 365 products (Word, Excel, Access, Outlook, Teams), pen and paper, social media platform, camera, scanner, etc.)
- **Format** the records exist in (paper, microfilm, electronic documents, databases, photographs, digital images, voice mail, audio and video recordings, instant messages, e-mail messages, text messages, etc.)
- **Location** where records are stored (office cubicles, file cabinets, off-site storage, hard drives, shared drives, OneDrive, SharePoint, CD/DVDs, electronic document management systems, cloud or vendor storage, external storage devices, websites, etc.)

Printing Electronic Records is Not Required for Official Recordkeeping

Records management laws (MCL 18.1284-1292, 24.401-406, and 399.809-812) do not require that records be retained in specified formats. Most agencies can decide which format they want to keep their official records in, paper or electronic. *Note: Agencies should verify that the laws, regulations, and policies governing their activities do not have unique requirements.*

Agencies are encouraged to follow consistent recordkeeping practices. It is important to avoid filing official records in locations that can only be accessed by one employee, like email accounts. Supervisors should designate where official records are stored and establish [recordkeeping rules](#) for the business process.

Keeping Permanent or Long-Term Electronic Records

“*Permanent*” means the records must be kept *forever*. They can *never* be destroyed. Agencies are not required to create and retain paper versions of records that are created electronically. However, the technology that agencies are using today will become obsolete. Permanent and long-term electronic records will need to be migrated to new technology on a regular basis, so they remain accessible and usable for their full retention period.



Scanning Paper Records and Destroying the Original

If paper records are scanned in compliance with the [Standards for Capturing Digital Images from Paper or Microfilm \(effective August 15, 2005\)](#), the paper can be destroyed and the digital images can be used as records. Compliance with these standards ensures an acceptable reproduction of the original that can be used in a court of law as evidence.

Note: Municipal construction documents have special requirements, see [MCL 24.402a](#) "Reproduction of construction documents; electronic or digital file format; requirements; disposal or destruction of certain construction documents; definitions" for additional information.

Using Personal Technology to Conduct Government Business

Government records document government activities. Government employees who conduct government activities using personal resources (such as personal email accounts, social media tools (such as Facebook or Twitter), personal cell phones, home computers, etc.) are creating government records that are subject to Retention and Disposal Schedules, as well as FOIA and litigation. Local governments may have policies that prohibit the use of personal resources to conduct government activities.

Personal records document an employee's personal life, including employee benefits, personal financial accounts, health, family, social events with co-workers and friends, personal purchases and shopping, photos, videos, music, etc. They should be stored separately from government records, using non-government resources. Local governments may have policies that prohibit the use of government resources for purposes unrelated to the conduct of official business.

Records Not Listed on a Schedule

Records cannot be legally destroyed if they are not listed on a [schedule](#) (general or agency-specific). Local government agencies must prepare and submit their own schedule revision to DTMB Records Management Services if they identify unscheduled records that need to be destroyed. [The instructions and forms used to develop agency-specific schedules are available online.](#)

Retaining Old Data

Electronic records must be retained in accordance with a [Retention and Disposal Schedule](#), so it is very important that the data and documents stored in the database are listed on a schedule. The schedule will tell the agency how long to keep the older data and will help with designing the new computer system to purge data at the appropriate time.

Keeping Electronic Records Accessible When Technology Changes

New technology is not always compatible with older technology. Agencies are responsible for ensuring that older electronic records remain accessible as technology is upgraded or changed. Each time technology upgrades and changes take place, agencies should inform their



State of Michigan

Records Management Services



information technology staff about the existence and location of older electronic records so they can be kept accessible.

Questions?

State of Michigan

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