



State of Michigan Records Management Services



Tip Sheet: Text Messaging

Text messaging is an important communication tool used by almost everyone in today's world. However, in the context of Records Management, texting presents its own unique challenges because of the sheer volume of messages, and because people can use personal devices to create government records. Even with its challenges, it is expected that people will continue to communicate via text messages for government business, and sometimes it is unavoidable even on personal devices.

Like all other government records, text messages that document the official activities of government agencies can be considered public record and must be retained in compliance with approved **Retention and Disposal Schedules**. Schedules created by the State of Michigan are format neutral. It is important to remember that the content of the message is what drives the retention period, not the format. State of Michigan schedules for state government can be found on the [RMS intranet site](#) and local government schedules can be found at <https://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement>. Please note that local governments may also have their own specific schedules and can contact Records Management Services to assist if you have questions.

Some best practices and guidelines for text messages and personal devices are:

- Email is preferable to using text messaging to document business decisions as emails originate and are stored on the agency's network.
- Government assigned devices should be used for government business and personal devices for personal business. The State of Michigan's Acceptable Use of Information Technology Standard (1340.00.130.02) prohibits the use of unapproved technology for conducting state business.
- Keep messages on personal devices transitory whenever possible to avoid having to manage government records on personal devices.
- If a text message needs to be retained to support a business process, employees should transfer the messages to the agency's network and/or devices.
- If records are created on a phone, capture the text via screenshot and file it appropriately for its proper retention period.
- If personal devices are used for government business, they may be subject to discovery in litigation and FOIA.

You can also ask the following non-exhaustive list of questions (*NARA Bulletin 2023-02*) to help determine the record status of electronic message content:

- Does the text message contain evidence of an agency's policies, business, or mission?
- Is the information only available in the electronic message?

- Does the agency use the tool to convey official agency information?
- Is there a business need for the information?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you may be in possession of a public record and should take the appropriate steps to preserve it accordingly.

Additional Information

Please visit the Records Management Services' website (<https://inside.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>) to find additional information about records management procedures, schedules, best practices, and training. Records Management Services can be contacted at recordscenter@michigan.gov.