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## INTRODUCTION

If you are a government employee or contractor working for a federal agency, records management is part of your job. This pamphlet explains your responsibilities for federal records and provides the context for understanding records management in the federal government and in the Department of Energy. [TOP](#)

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

### It's the Law

Federal agencies are required by law (the Federal Records Act of 1950, as amended and codified in Title 44 of the United States Code) to adequately document their missions, functions, policies, procedures, decisions, and transactions. They are required to preserve historically valuable records, and it is a crime to destroy records without approval from the National Archives. [TOP](#)



### Oversight Organizations

In the federal government, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), the Office of Management and Budget, and the General Services Administration share oversight of federal records management programs. They issue regulatory requirements to ensure proper, consistent recordkeeping across federal agencies. [TOP](#)

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT IN THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

The Department of Energy (DOE) has issued a records management directive, *DOE O.243.1, Records Management Program*, that sets forth requirements and responsibilities for implementing and maintaining an efficient and economical records management program in accordance with law and regulatory requirements.

The Records Management Division, under the purview of the Departmental Records Officer, supports compliance with the Federal Records Act and promotes economical, efficient, and effective records management. The Records Management Division is part of the Office of IT Planning, Architecture, and E-Government, under the Chief Information Officer.

Programs and offices throughout the Department have records management programs in place. These records management programs are under the purview of Program Records Officials (PRO), Records Management Field Officers (RMFO), and Records Liaison Officers (RLO). These individuals can assist you with records management issues. Organizations may provide records management training related to specific program or mission business needs. Refer to the Assistance section to learn how to find information on Departmental records management contacts. [TOP](#)

# IMPORTANCE OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT

*Implementation of a sound Records Management Program facilitates decision-makers and others having the right information in support of mission accomplishment; and the creation and maintenance of records to protect the rights and interests of the Department and those we serve.*

Complete and accurate records document the activities and decisions of the Department. They support mission accomplishment, day-to-day business needs, and interaction with the public. Records ensure continuity and consistency in administration, assist officials and their successors in making informed decisions, and provide information required by Congress and agencies that perform oversight functions.

Records are retained to meet legal requirements and protect the rights and interests of the government and people who are affected by government actions and decisions. Records preserve the nation's history for future generations.

Records are the personal legacy of federal and contractor personnel who participate in accomplishing the Department's mission.

Today's records are tomorrow's history.  
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1945, Ed Wescott, Army Corp of Engineers, in the dark room at Oak Ridge.



1960, Fernald, Ohio, Vivian Bowman and Tom Kloth help make badges with the new combination security and personal dosimeter.



1980 Fernald chemist samples uranium dust collector residue.

These images are from the DOE Digital Photo Archive where photographic records of the Department's history are made available to the public.

Proper documentation of your records allows us to reconstruct the development of our own and our predecessors' policies and decisions, furnish successors with the information needed to understand current and past actions and leave an enduring record of our public service. Capturing today's information in records that are accessible in organized files or electronic recordkeeping systems ensures that the records will be available when later needed.

# YOUR RECORDS MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

Your basic obligations regarding records are to: 1) create (or receive) records needed to do business and 2) ensure that your records are maintained so that they are accessible to others and easy to retrieve. This means that you must create records that adequately document your activities, index them accurately, and maintain them in a safe environment.

When records are consulted infrequently they have become inactive and should be moved to a records storage area (if they are paper records) or electronically archived (if they are electronic records). Refer to approved records disposition schedules for specific instruction on when and how to dispose of records. If you are uncertain of how long a record must be retained, consult the RLO in your organization or the Records Management page of the Office of the Chief Information Officer website at <http://energy.gov/cio/guidance/records-management> (click on Disposition Schedules). A list of RLOs is provided on the website at <http://energy.gov/cio/contact-us/contacts-records-management>.



## What Is a Record?

The first step to meeting your basic obligations is to understand the definition of a federal record. The definition below means that a record can be anything that documents the government's activities or is used to conduct government business regardless of who created it or how the information was recorded. If an electronic information system or website is being used for government business, then it contains official records. Items referred to as "documents" or "information" usually are records if they are used for government business. Informational items from the Department posted to social media sites are records. Forms completed on paper or online are records. Signed official correspondence is a record, as are emails used to conduct DOE's business.

Determining whether a particular document is a record does not depend on whether it is an original or a copy. Duplicate copies of the same document may each have record status, if they serve a separate function and are controlled under different files or filing systems.

### **Federal Records Definition:**

As defined in 44 U.S.C. 3301, the term includes:  
"all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that agency or its legitimate successor as evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of the data in them."

When significant decisions are made orally, by telephone, and in conferences and meetings, these decisions and their associated deliberations should be documented and incorporated into official files.

Debriefings capture significant information from meetings and conferences, technical projects, research efforts, and other assignments. They capture the how and why of mission accomplishment and the technical, scientific, and historical significance. Debriefings should be documented and preserved to describe actions that carry out program tasks or mission; describe results achieved, knowledge or information gained, and the comprehension and understanding that resulted.

Working papers may consist of calculations, notes, and drafts created as part of an analysis or to prepare a final document. Working papers are records if they create a decision trail, document research conducted in pursuit of a decision, identify steps taken to finalize a decision or product, or include input from other organizations participating in the decision process.

Organizations may produce summaries that document the decisions and history of their programs and projects. These summaries do not replace the records created and maintained by the employees that document their activities and capture the details of accomplishing the Department's mission. [TOP](#)



### **What Is Not a Record – Non-Record Material**

Non-record materials are government-owned informational items that do not meet the legal definition of a record in 44 U.S.C. 3301 or that have been excluded from coverage by the definition.

Personal papers or private property that relate only to your personal affairs and do not affect agency business are not federal records. These items include: 1) papers accumulated by an official before joining Government service; 2) materials relating solely to an individual's professional affiliations and private political associations; 3) books, diaries, and personal notes that are not prepared or received in the process of transacting Government business.

Extra copies of documents may be maintained specifically for personal reference when warranted by the level and distinction of the position held by the originator, the significance of the research, or the prestige of the researcher. These documents are considered non-record material rather than personal papers and must be limited in volume.

Working papers maintained only for reference are non-record material and may be disposed of when no longer needed. Extra copies of documents maintained for personal reference are non-records. These copies are made at the time the document originated, and they must be kept to a limited volume.

Keep non-record items in a separate location from your records, and do not file them together. If both are used in the same document, treat the part pertaining to agency business as a record.

### **Keeping Your Records Accessible and Findable**

The Department has no single Department-wide records management solution. DOE organizations have their own approaches to managing records that best meet their unique business needs, and you should become familiar with the practices of your organization to ensure that you meet your basic records management obligations. Learn how and where records are kept. Filing regularly and carefully is as important as anything else you do. Don't leave records stacked on your desk or a convenient shelf. If you keep records in your own office, make sure they are filed correctly so they can be retrieved in an

efficient manner. Your organization's PRO or the records manager in your office can acquaint you with how your organization manages records.

Practices vary across DOE. Some offices have records or document management applications for consistent management of correspondence and documents. Others use shared drives and employ formal naming conventions. Projects may have configuration management systems to control project records. Corporate offices, such as Human Resources, may have sophisticated information systems to ensure that records meet legal and regulatory requirements. In some offices, records are maintained on individuals' PCs until they are disposed. Some organizations may print and file paper records.

## When You Leave – You Can't Take It with You

Records disposition is part of the Department's exit procedure. If records are stored on your PC or shared drive or in your desk or office, before you change jobs or leave the Department ask your supervisor to designate someone to take custody of them.

Non-record material may not be removed from the Department without examination and prior approval of your organization's PRO, or RMFO, or the Departmental Records Officer. [TOP](#)

Records are Government property. Under no circumstances may departing employees remove Federal records from the Department's custody. The maximum penalty for the willful and unlawful removal, mutilation, obliteration, or destruction of any Federal record is three years in prison (18 U.S.C. 2071).

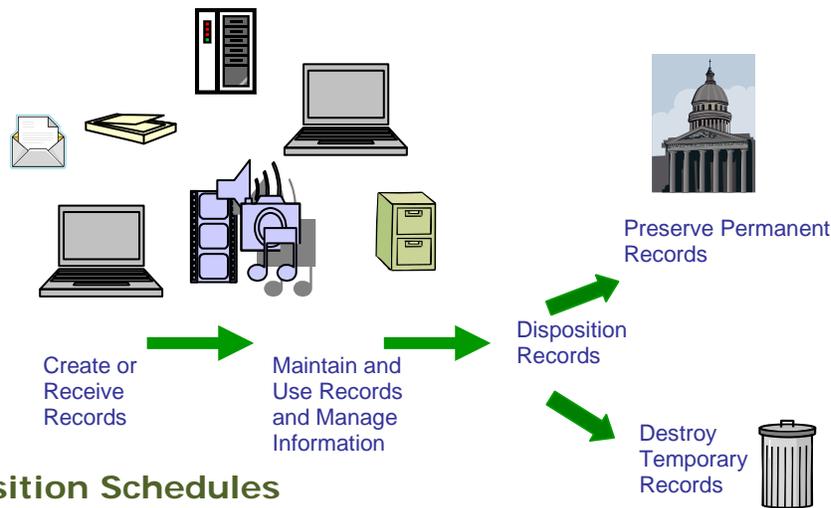
## Security Considerations

Your records management practices should comply with DOE information security requirements.

- ❖ The DOE Office of Cyber Security under the Chief Information Officer provides training and guidance on information systems security. Courses are offered via the Department's Online Learning Center (<https://olc2.energy.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp>).
- ❖ The DOE Office of Headquarters Security Operations is responsible for providing requirements and guidance on the proper use, handling, storage and protection of classified records and records that contain controlled unclassified information. The *Information Security Manual, M 470.4-4A*, provides information about security requirements. [TOP](#)

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT LIFECYCLE

Records are created or received. They are maintained and used to conduct business. When records are no longer needed for business or legal purposes, they become inactive and are dispositioned in accordance with a records disposition schedule.



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## Records Disposition Schedules

### Records Management Lifecycle

There are two types of records – temporary and permanent. Only 1 – 2% of records are determined to be permanent.

Records are assigned to disposition schedules that state how long records must be retained. When the retention period is completed, temporary records may be destroyed only in accordance with established procedures and appropriate approvals.

Permanent records are those of historical value that are retained permanently in the National Archives. When they are no longer needed to support the Department’s business activities, they are transferred to the National Archives where, according to their security classification, they are made available for scholars, historians, researchers, and the public.

NARA has strict requirements to ensure that all electronic records (e-records) are identified and scheduled.

Records disposition schedules are developed by the records management community in coordination with subject matter experts. Records disposition schedules accomplish several records management tasks:

1. Assign retention periods.
2. Establish subject categories for records.
3. Provide instructions for how records are to be organized and destroyed.

Schedules must follow established approval procedures before being used. The proposed records disposition schedules are submitted to the Departmental Records Officer for review and concurrence and submission to NARA for approval. The Archivist of the United States has sole authority for the disposition of Federal Records.

Records that have not been assigned a disposition schedule or that are waiting for a disposition schedule to be approved are unscheduled records and considered to be permanent until their value has been determined and disposition schedules approved.

DOE Records Disposition Schedules are available from the DOE CIO website:

<http://energy.gov/cio/guidance/records-management/disposition-schedules>.

NARA provides a series of General Records Schedules (GRS) for agencies to use, but in many cases, agencies have unique needs and must create records schedules that address these needs. The GRS are available on the NARA website <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs/>.

NARA provides a Records Control Schedules repository that enables access to scanned records schedules developed by federal agencies and approved by the Archivist of the United States (<http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/rcs/>). [TOP](#)

## ELECTRONIC RECORDS & RECORDKEEPING

Most records today are created electronically (born digital) and must meet NARA requirements. For existing e-records, NARA requires processes and procedures to manage electronic records in existing electronic information systems, the ability to identify and schedule e-records; transfer of permanent e-records to NARA per NARA approved disposition schedules; and the timely destruction of temporary records.

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## LAW, REGULATION, AND POLICY

- ❖ Federal Records Act of 1950, as amended (codified in Chapters 21, 29, 31, and 33 of Title 44 of the U.S.C.)
- ❖ Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (codified in Chapter 35 of Title 44 of the U.S.C.)
- ❖ Public Law 104-106: National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 1996, Section 2(a)(5) Division E, Information Technology Management Reform Act of 1996
- ❖ 36 CFR Chapter XII, Subchapter B
- ❖ NARA Bulletin 2010-20: *Continuing Agency Responsibilities for Scheduling Electronic Records*
- ❖ DOE Order 0 243.1 "Records Management Program" [TOP](#)

## ASSISTANCE

For assistance with records identification, permanent records, personal papers, records disposition schedules, and additional information about the Department's Records Management Program, contact the PRO in your organization or the Departmental Records Officer at 301-903-3455 or [DOERM@hq.doe.gov](mailto:DOERM@hq.doe.gov). Contact information for Program Records Officials and other members of the records management community is available on the DOE CIO web page <http://energy.gov/cio/contact-us/contacts-records-management>. [TOP](#)

## RECORDS MANAGEMENT TERMS

**Adequate and proper documentation** means a record of the conduct of Government business that is complete and accurate to the extent required to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency and that is designed to furnish the information necessary to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency's activities.

**Disposition** means those actions taken regarding records no longer needed for the conduct of the regular current business of the agency.

**Documentary materials** is a collective term for records and non-records materials that refers to all media on which information is recorded, regardless of the nature of the medium or the method or circumstances of recording.

**File** means an arrangement of records. The term is used to denote papers, photographs, photographic copies, maps, machine-readable information, or other recorded information regardless of physical form or characteristics, accumulated or maintained in filing equipment, boxes, or machine-readable media, or on shelves, and occupying office or storage space.



**Non-record materials** are those federally owned informational materials that do not meet the statutory definition of records (44 U.S.C. 3301) or that have been excluded from coverage by the definition. Excluded materials are extra copies of documents kept only for reference, stocks of publications and processed documents, and library or museum materials intended solely for reference or exhibit.

**Permanent record** means any Federal record that has been determined by NARA to have sufficient value to warrant its preservation in the National Archives of the United States. Permanent records include all records accessioned by NARA into the National Archives of the United States and later increments of the same records, and those for which the disposition is permanent on SF 115s, Request for Records Disposition Authority, approved by NARA on or after May 14, 1973.

**Records management** means the planning, controlling, directing, organizing, training, promoting, and other managerial activities involved with respect to records creation, records maintenance and use, and records disposition in order to achieve adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and effective and economical management of agency operations.

**Temporary records** are any records which have been determined by the Archivist of the United States to have insufficient value (on the basis of current standards) to warrant its preservation by the National Archives and Records Administration. This determination may take the form of:

- (a) A series of records designated as disposable in an agency records disposition schedule approved by NARA (Standard Form 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority); or
- (b) A series of records designated as disposable in a General Records Schedule.

**Unscheduled records** are those that have not been included on a Standard Form 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, approved by NARA; those described but not authorized for disposal on an SF 115 approved prior to May 14, 1973; and those described on an SF 115 but not approved by NARA (withdrawn, canceled, or disapproved).

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