

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

	<h1>GENERAL ORDER</h1> 100.20	
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Originating From Bureau of Administrative Services	Issue Date 3/12/2012	Revision Date	Attachments A, B & C
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SUBJECT: Records Retention & Disposition Policy

APPLICABILITY: All Personnel

Policy:

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that necessary records and documents are adequately protected and maintained by the Howard County Department of Fire & Rescue Services (DFRS); and to ensure that records that are no longer needed or of no value are destroyed at the appropriate time. This policy applies to all records, regardless of format, whether paper, electronic, tape, audio, or more traditional media. In addition, this policy is in compliance with Maryland State Government Article 10, Sections 631-634 and COMAR 14.18.02.

1. GENERAL

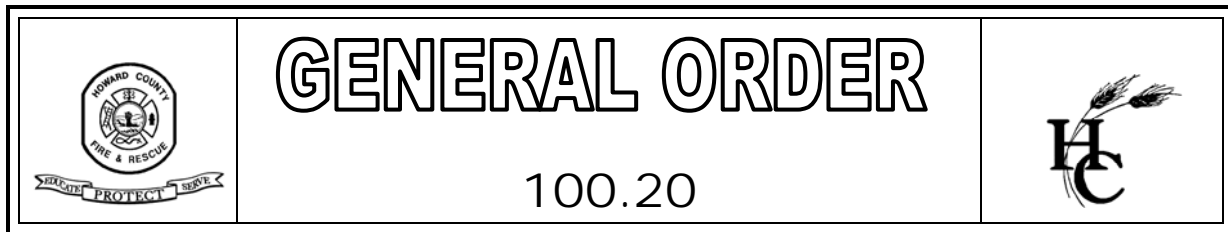
Records management is the practice of identifying, classifying, archiving, preserving and destroying records. While controlling the life cycle of records, records management must include the preparation of records retention and disposition plans and programs.

Individuals responsible for the retention of records are also responsible for the destruction of records following the retention period. Documents should be destroyed in a manner that ensures that all sensitive or confidential material can no longer be read or interpreted. This means that paper documents should be shredded, and electronic documents should be erased or otherwise rendered unreadable.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of each bureau Assistant Chief and/or Program Manager to ensure effective records retention management so that public records are not arbitrarily destroyed and that legal record keeping requirements are met. Each bureau and/or program manager shall identify a records coordinator who routinely evaluates its records retention schedules to ensure compliance with county and departmental requirements. All staff that either generate and/or exercise control over records should be trained in basic record retention requirements. The bureau of Administrative Services will coordinate periodic training.

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Each bureau will scan documents in order to back up data, save space and reduce costs. These documents will be scanned using the County's current scanning system and follow the same retention and disposition schedules as paper records.

This policy defines the period of time and the format during which records are maintained and specifies procedures for the transfer and disposition of records. This policy addresses the following topics:

1. The period of time during which records have operational, legal, fiscal or historical value.
2. The period of time records are considered active and must be maintained in the primary filing area.
3. The point in time when records can reasonably be transferred to a secondary storage facility.
4. The method of records disposal or disposition.

3. PROCEDURES

3.1. Retention Periods:

Each record retention and disposition schedule must contain a description of the records maintained with instructions for their retention and disposition. The schedule specifies how long records must be kept and when records are to be destroyed or transferred. All schedules must be reviewed and approved by the appropriate Assistant Chief and the Administrative Services Bureau Chief. Once approved by DFRS then schedules are approved by the Howard County Records Officer and the State Archivist for Maryland.

The State requires that retention schedules to be reviewed at least every 5 years and more frequently if there are changes in the department's business processes.

If you do *not* have a records schedule for your bureau or program then start with a ***records inventory***.

3.2. Record Inventory

The purpose of the inventory is to identify existing records and to gain an understanding of how the information is used within the organization. The data gathered during the inventory assists in planning such as the retention, disposition, vital records protection and disaster recovery plan. Use Records Retention Inventory Worksheet – Attachment A.

3.3. Record Value

After the inventory is completed, then determine the period which each record is active, when it becomes inactive and the appropriate destruction method. Below are the basic guidelines:

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1. Operational value – this is the period of time during which an organization uses a record to perform its primary function. Generally two periods are determined: the retention period during which the records should be maintained in active storage and the period of time the records should be maintained in inactive storage.
2. Legal value – records required to be kept by law or those that may be needed in case of litigation.
3. Fiscal value – this refers to records related to financial transactions of the organization, especially those required for audit or tax purposes.
4. Historical value – this is the long-term value of records to document past events.

3.4. Determining the Retention Period

Generally, the records will be maintained in an active filing area for a period of time then will be moved to an inactive area (i.e., offsite storage facility) for the remainder of the retention period.

Note: Each bureau's Records Coordinator has access to the Legal Requirements for Business Requirements (LRBR) system where they can determine the retention periods. Complete the Retention Schedule – Attachment B.

3.5. Disposition of Records

At the end of the appropriate retention period, inactive records shall be destroyed according to the applicable schedule. This applies to records stored onsite, electronically, and records stored at an approved offsite storage facility. Below are the specific instructions from the Howard County Records Retention Department. Note: Each bureau will handle their respective disposition of records.

3.5.1 New Pickups for Storage - All departments are responsible for initiating the request for pickup of their records to be placed in storage. *Procedures for the preparation of the record box labeling and the full completion of the accompanying paperwork should be followed as outlined by the offsite vendor.* Authorized department staff is responsible for running a department inventory report to verify that all records picked up are now reflected in the bureaus stored records inventory. This should be done no later than 2 weeks after records have been picked up.

3.5.2 Retrievals from Storage for Reference – All departments are responsible for initiating the request to have any of their records removed from storage and returned to the department for business processing reference. *Procedures for the request whether online at the vendor's website or verbally through their customer service department are the responsibility of "authorized" department staff or Records Coordinators.*

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Once records are returned, department's should monitor their inventory of stored records to assure the return which will be reflected in the return to inventory date on the inventory report. If the department should retrieve any records from storage with the intent of not returning them, the Records Management department should be notified with record ID detail of this "Perm Out" situation. Record boxes that are permanently removed from offsite vendor storage should never be reused to store new records. The record ID should remain as a permanent reference to the original contents for that ID.

3.5.3 Destruction of County Records at Vendor Site – County records that are stored at the approved offsite vendor location will only be destroyed with the request and with the Approval of the County Records Manager or authorized designee. This destruction restriction is part of the contract agreement with the offsite storage vendor. Procedure for this destruction is as follows:

- a. Destruction Eligibility Report is run at vendor website by Records Management on a quarterly basis.
- b. Destruction Eligibility Report is broken down by department and sent to each department's Records Coordinator asking for department approval to destroy records listed. A memo is attached requesting the information be sent back by a certain date. Second requests are made when necessary until all approvals are received.
- c. A single list/report of all records that are eligible for destruction and have been approved by departments is then sent to the offsite storage vendor.
- d. A formal destruction document is then returned listing all records requested for destruction, and this requires a County signature of approval. Authorized Records Management signature is applied and the document is then sent back to the vendor to complete the destruction process. Out offsite vendor, as part of the negotiated contract, will only destroy County records stored at their location based on this RM signature and approval form.
- e. When all the records have been pulled and destroyed, we receive a destruction certificate/confirmation from the vendor that is retained for our records.

3.5.4 Destruction of County Records on County Premises – All County departments are responsible for initiating requests for shredding of documents on County premises that have been collected in the confidential bins or are being purged from department files or department electronic systems. Departments should maintain specific records of any documents being shredded. Attached is a copy of the Certificate of Records

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Destruction (Attachment C) that should be filled out, signed and a copy forwarded to Records Management. The shredding on County premises should not include the destruction of records removed from the offsite vendor storage. Records determined to have no further retention requirement and can be destroyed should be returned to the offsite inventory so that destruction is handled by Records Management according to the procedure stated above and according to the Retention schedule for the department. This provides a clear audit trail for records stored offsite as well as allowing the vendor to change the status in their system which eliminates further storage charges to the County. Any exceptions to this will be the sole responsibility of the department and may be subject to an audit exception.

NOTE: All vendor charges for record pickups, retrievals, pulling and returning of boxes to storage shelves, and truck charges are the responsibility of the departments. All charges should be clearly detailed on a monthly invoice, as part of the negotiated contract terms with the vendor. Charges should be verified prior to payment by credit card at the vendor's online payment site. County departments should be budgeted to "Pay by PDQ Card" for any records related services as stated. All charges for storage and destruction of inventory at the offsite vendor location is the responsibility of the Records Management department as the Master Account custodian.

4. LITIGATION NOTICE HOLD

Any document which has received a legal notice from the Office of Law to be held due to possible litigation shall be retained until the Office of Law has released the documents.

5. ADMINISTRATION

The bureau of Administrative Services will administer this policy together with the bureau Records Coordinators and will coordinate with the County's Records Retention Manager.

Approved:

_____  _____
William F. Googara, III
Chief

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RECORDS RETENTION INVENTORY WORKSHEET

ATTACHMENT A

1. Department (Please include division, bureau or section):		
2. Address:	3. Zip Code:	4. Date:
5. Person Completing Form:	6. Title:	7. Phone:

RECORD INFORMATION

8. Record Series Title (no abbreviations):
9. Variant or Alternate Titles (abbreviations OK):
10. Record Series Description. Include the purpose of this record series (why you collect the information, how you use it, etc.) and the data included in this record series (you may attach representative documents):
11. In the event of a disaster, is this record vital to the Continuity of Operations (COOP)? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
12. What is the primary value of this record? <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative <input type="checkbox"/> Legal <input type="checkbox"/> Fiscal <input type="checkbox"/> Historical
13. Are these records subject to <input type="checkbox"/> audit and/or <input type="checkbox"/> litigation?
14. List all specific legal citations which govern this series:
15. What format types (e.g. paper, computer data, microfilm, videos, etc.) are included in this series?
16. Is this record series the original or "record" copy? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If not, where can the official copy be found?

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ATTACHMENT A (CONTINUED)

RECORDS RETENTION INVENTORY WORKSHEET

17. How long are these records needed for day-to-day business functions (daily, weekly, monthly, annually)?
18. After these records have become inactive, how long would you like to store them off-site?
19. Recommended Retention:
20. Will these records ever be _____microfilmed or _____ scanned into an optical imaging system? If so, at what point in the retention will this happen?
21. Signature of Bureau Chief or Program Manager: _____

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RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

ATTACHMENT B

DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL SERVICES RECORDS MANAGEMENT DIVISION RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL SCHEDULE		Schedule No. Page of
Agency	Division/Unit	
Item No.	Description	Retention

Schedule Approved by Department, Agency, or Division Representative. Date Signature Typed Name Title	Schedule Approved by County Records Management Representative. Date Signature
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Schedule Authorized by State Archivist Date Signature
