

# RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

If you need more in-depth assistance, please email us at [archivesrm@state.co.us](mailto:archivesrm@state.co.us) with your question. Please be sure to write "Records Retention Question" in the subject/title box.

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## What are the laws that cover the retention and destruction of public records?

Title 24 - Article 80 of the Colorado Revised Statutes provides for the preservation of permanent records and the destruction of records that are no longer of value to public agencies. [SB03-033](#) made significant changes to the above Title 24 - Article 80. The Colorado State Archives as the designee of the Executive Director of the Department of Personnel sets the policy for the preservation of records of enduring value and the destruction of records that are no longer of value. All State agencies and political subdivisions must consult periodically with the State Archives concerning the retention and disposition of their records. The State Archives does not provide retention guidance for records created and maintained by private entities or non-profit groups.

## Are there any guidelines or manuals on-line that tell me how long I need to keep my records?

Currently, there is a State [Records Management Manual](#) that covers the records that are common to all State agencies including higher education agencies. State agencies may destroy records listed in the manual at any time. There are also a [Municipal Retention Manual](#) and a [School District Retention Manual](#) that covers the records of cities and towns and the state's school districts. Municipalities must **adopt** the *Municipal Retention Schedule* in order to utilize it. Libraries, school districts are to adopt the *Colorado School District Records Management Manual* in order to utilize it. For most other records, State agencies and political subdivisions need to implement a records retention schedule with the Colorado State Archives. **NEED TEXT FOR SPECIAL DISTRICTS RECORDS MANAGEMENT MANUAL**

## What is a records retention schedule?

A records retention schedule is developed specifically for a public agency. It lists all records maintained by the agency and how long they need to be kept. The State Archivist, the State Auditor's Office and the Attorney General's Office sign the retention schedule. Some of the records need to be retained permanently, while others can be destroyed once they have exceeded the minimum retention period. The records retention schedule is a legal authorization to destroy records.

## What is a minimum retention period?

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A minimum retention period is the shortest amount of time a record must be kept before it is destroyed.

## **How are minimum retention periods developed?**

State or Federal laws or regulations set some retention periods, while others are based on laws or regulations. For most records, the State Archives along with the agency appraises the legal, fiscal, administrative and informational value of the record to arrive at a retention period.

## **How can I tell if my agency has a records retention schedule?**

The State Archives keeps a copy of all retention schedules on file. For information, e-mail us at: [archivesrm@state.co.us](mailto:archivesrm@state.co.us). Please put "Records Management" in the subject line.

## **My records retention schedule is old. How can I get an updated schedule?**

Since records retention schedules are developed specifically for each entity, the State Archives does not automatically update them. Entities are responsible for notifying the State Archives as to what records on their schedules they no longer maintain and what records need to be added to their schedule.

## **Do I need to keep the paper copy of all permanent records?**

Most permanent records may be microfilmed or imaged and placed on an optical disk. For records that are microfilmed, the negative microfilm must be inspected and deposited in the State Archives prior to destruction of the original record. For imaged records, consult the State Archives' [Optical Disk Policy Statement](#). Contact the State Archives for more information on either of these options.

## **I work for a political subdivision of the State (i.e. municipality, county, school district, special district). Every year I receive a "records retention disposition authorization" and a "certificate of disposal" from the State Archives. What are these documents?**

The State Archives sends out an annual authorization to destroy records for another year. You should refer to your records retention schedule to know what records you can destroy. Once you have completed the destruction of records, fill out the pink certificate of disposal and return it to the State Archives.

## **How do I destroy my records?**

Records can be destroyed by shredding, burning (where no local burn ordinance is in effect), recycling, or landfill. Records that are confidential in nature should be destroyed by shredding, or they can be destroyed professionally by a company that can certify to security destruction.