

# Preserving and Disposing of Government Records

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# I. Introduction

Records are vitally important to the operation of any organization; they serve as the organization's memory and are evidence of past events and the basis for future actions. When created, maintained, and disposed of in an orderly and systematic manner, records are a tremendous asset, but when treated in a haphazard and disorderly manner, they can reduce the effectiveness of an organization and substantially increase its costs.

The purpose of this publication is to help Minnesota state and local government entities identify records, assess their value, and determine how long to keep them. It provides a general overview of state and local government entities' records management responsibilities.

## How to Use This Publication

This publication was created to walk you through the basic principles of records management. It starts out by defining a "government entity" and what its responsibilities are. It describes official records, and then goes through the basic steps of setting up your own records management system.

Throughout this publication, you will be referred to other government entities or resources for additional information and/or clarification. [Section IX, "Need More Information?"](#) contains contact information and web site links for these other resources. Please see that section for further information.

# II. Responsibilities of Government Entities

Countless dollars are spent needlessly in the maintenance of useless records. Conversely, important information has been lost because needed records have been carelessly destroyed. To ensure that records are properly cared for, certain record keeping responsibilities of state and local government officials are defined in Minnesota Statutes sections (M.S.) 15.17, 138.17 and 138.19.

One of the most commonly-asked questions is "Are we a government entity?" In general terms, if you are a state agency, city, county, township, school district, a subdivision of any state agency, city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision or statewide system, you are a government entity and therefore subject to Minnesota records management statutes.

By law, the chief administrative officer of the government entity has the responsibility to protect records and deliver them to a successor to assure smooth transition and continuity. Although entities must keep records, this does not mean all records must be retained permanently. In fact, the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and accompanying rules state that as a government employee, you have a responsibility to dispose of data when it is determined to be unnecessary (see M.S. 13.07 and Minnesota Rules 1205.1500). The Data Practices Act will be discussed in more detail later in this publication.

M.S. 138.17 outlines the procedure that must be followed to dispose of records that no longer have value to an entity. The statute creates the Records Disposition Panel, which consists of the Attorney General, Legislative Auditor (for state records), State Auditor (for local records), and Director of the Minnesota Historical Society. The members of the Panel have the power to determine retention periods for records, to approve their destruction, or to direct that records of long-term legal, fiscal, administrative, or historical value be preserved by the governmental entity or at the State Archives. [See our website](#) for more information about the Panel.

Occasionally, special statutes state how long certain records must be retained. However, M.S. 138.17 takes precedence over any special law unless that law is specifically exempted from M.S. 138.17. That is, unless a statute says it is exempt from M.S. 138.17, the retention period listed is used only as a guideline; only the Records Disposition Panel has the authority to approve a retention period.

### III. What is a Record?

The definition of a government record is found in M.S. 138.17, subd. 1. Government records include such things as correspondence, memoranda, reports, and “other data, information, or documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, storage media or conditions of use, made or received by an officer or agency of the state and an officer or agency of a county, city, town, school district, municipal subdivision or corporation or other public authority or political entity within the state pursuant to state law or in connection with the transaction of public business by an officer or agency.” M.S. 15.17 states that government entities “*shall make and preserve all records necessary to a full and accurate knowledge of their official activities.*” [Italics added]

In other words, information that you create or receive in fulfillment of your government work is considered a record, and is subject to records management statutes. Over the past several years, questions have been raised about the difference between paper and electronic records; for example, “How long do we have to keep correspondence we’ve received in the mail versus what we receive via email?” The answer is there is no difference; it does not matter in which form the correspondence was received, be it paper or electronic. The record is still “correspondence” and the retention period is the same for each. To assist state agencies in understanding email and other technology-based tools, the State Department of Employee Relations has issued a Statewide Policy: “Appropriate Use of Electronic Communication and Technology.” Please refer to the most recent version of this policy, linked to in [Section IX](#), for further details.

Another useful definition comes from the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International:

“Records are the evidence of what the organization does. They capture its business activities and transactions such as contract negotiations, business correspondence, personnel files, and financial statements, just to name a few.

“Records come in many formats:

- Physical paper in our files such as memos, contracts, marketing materials, and reports
- Electronic messages such as email content and their attachments and instant messages
- Content of the [organization’s] web site, as well as the documents that reside on PDAs, flash drives, desktops, servers, and document management systems
- Information captured in the organization’s various databases”

(From the ARMA International website, April 2008)

According to M.S. 138.17, subd. 4:

Government records **are not**:

- data and information that does not become part of an official transaction;
- library and museum material made or acquired and kept solely for reference or exhibit purposes;
- extra copies of documents kept only for convenience of reference;
- stock of publications and processed documents;
- bonds, coupons, or other obligations or evidence of indebtedness, the destruction or other disposition of which is governed by other laws.

## IV. Taking an Inventory

The first step in implementing an effective records management program is to identify all record and non-record materials stored in your office space and storage areas. This includes electronic records such as email, memoranda and databases. A records inventory identifies what records you have, where they are stored, and in what quantity. This process not only will provide information on the volume of records stored, but also will help identify records that are no longer being created, and those that should be revised, automated, or eliminated. When taking your inventory, do not overlook attics, basements and closets. The purpose of the inventory is to use this data to develop effective records retention schedules.

Taking an inventory will involve identifying records series; evaluating the administrative, legal, fiscal and historical value of those records; defining data practices implications; and identifying essential records. A *records series* is a group of records filed together because they all relate to a particular subject.

Much of this evaluation process has been done for you by volunteers from local and state government in the form of a general records retention schedule, which lists records series common to most entities and indicates how long to keep them. General schedules have been developed and approved by the Records Disposition Panel for Minnesota counties, cities, school districts, townships and some functions of state agencies, and are available from the [State Archives website](#).

Obtaining a copy of the appropriate general schedule and comparing it to the records in your office will give you a good start on your records inventory.

For records in your office not listed on the general schedule, the “Records Inventory Worksheet” form can be used as a worksheet to gather needed information. You may print and make duplicates of this form for your own use (link found in [Section IX](#)).

The inventory form will guide you through the process of assessing the value of your records. This includes evaluating, classifying data for purposes of the Data Practices Act, identifying essential records, and determining a retention period for your records.

### Evaluating Records

To assess the importance of each record series, consider its present and future usefulness. A realistic retention period can be determined by assessing four values for each record series: administrative, legal, fiscal and historical.

#### *Administrative Value*

Records are created to fulfill the functions for which an entity is responsible. They have value as long as they assist the entity in performing either its current or future work. The primary administrative use of most records is exhausted when the transactions to which they relate have been completed. These transactions may pertain to long-term programs, so their administrative value may be extended on that basis. Most records have an administrative value whether it is long or short term. The entity must determine this value.

#### *Legal Value*

Records have legal value if they document or protect the rights or obligations of citizens or of the entity that created them. Some examples are legal decisions and opinions, fiscal documents representing agreements such as leases, titles and contracts, and records of actions such as claim papers and legal dockets.

There may be state or federal laws requiring a specific retention period for certain records. For instance, statutes of limitation specify the time after which legal rights cannot be enforced by civil action in court. Once a record's age exceeds the time specified, the likelihood it will be part of a lawsuit is so small that there is often little value in keeping records beyond this point.

Consult your legal counsel when determining the legal value of your records.

### *Fiscal Value*

A record has fiscal value if it pertains to financial transactions of the entity or if it is required for an audit. In some instances, the audit requirements of the federal government as well as those of the state must be considered. This information may be found in grant agreements or federal or state law.

Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB) has published a retention schedule that may be useful as a guideline for other agencies; this schedule is linked to on our website. A link to the MMB website is included in [Section IX](#).

### *Historical Value*

Some records have enduring historical value because they contain information about significant events or they document the history and development of an entity. They reflect experience and contain precedents for policies and procedures, and can be used as guides in solving present problems similar to those dealt with in the past. They are valuable to the state, to students, to researchers, to historians and to individual citizens as evidence of what took place. For assistance in determining the historical value of your records, contact the State Archives.

## **Determining a Retention Period**

Assessing the administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical value of each record series will help you determine how long each record must be kept. Retention periods are determined and expressed in one of three ways:

1. In terms of time; for example, "retain four years" or "retain permanently."
2. In terms of an event or action; for example, "retain until audit" or "retain until case closed."
3. In terms of both; for example, "retain 6 months after audit" or "retain 3 years after case closed."

## **Classifying Records Pursuant to the Data Practices Act**

The Minnesota Government Data Practices Act (M.S. Chapter 13) states that all government data collected, created, received, maintained or disseminated by any state or local agency or political subdivision must be made accessible to the public unless the data are classified as inaccessible by state statute, federal law or temporary classification. The only government entities exempt from the requirements of the Data Practices Act are non-metropolitan townships. Metropolitan-area townships are covered by the Data Practices Act.

This means that, by law, certain data in your office will have limited accessibility to the public and you are responsible for protecting that information. During the inventory process, identifying records that contain data which are not public will help you to comply with the Act. It will alert employees who work with records that contain sensitive data to take appropriate precautions. Properly observing the Data Practices Act could protect your entity from a costly lawsuit.

The classification of data and their definitions are:

**Public Data:** Data which are accessible to the public in accordance with the provisions of M.S. 13.03.

**Private Data on Individuals:** Data which are only accessible to the individual subject of the data and to entities authorized by law to gain access. These data are not accessible to the public.

**Confidential Data on Individuals:** Data which are only accessible to entities authorized by law to gain access. These data are not accessible to the individual subject of that data or to the public.

**Private Data on Decedents:** Data which, prior to the death of the data subject, were classified by statute, federal law, or temporary classification as private data.

**Confidential Data on Decedents:** Data which, prior to the death of the data subject, were classified by statute, federal law, or temporary classification as confidential data.

**Nonpublic Data Not on Individuals:** Data which are accessible to the subject, if any, of the data and to the entities authorized by law to gain access. These data are not accessible to the public.

**Protected Nonpublic Data Not on Individuals:** Data which are only accessible to entities authorized by law to gain access. These data are not accessible to the subject of the data or to the public.

Much of the government data that are classified as not public are identified in the Data Practices Act itself. Additional citations may be found in other state statutes or federal laws.

Please see the full text of M.S. Chapter 13 for specific classifications and requirements. If you need further assistance in determining the data practices classifications for your records, contact the Data Practices Responsible Authority for your entity, your legal counsel, and/or the Minnesota Department of Administration's Office of Data Practices and Open Meetings (formerly Information Policy Analysis Division).

## Identifying Essential Records

The term *essential record* is applied to any record that is necessary to the continuation or resumption of your operations. This means that if a disaster occurred, you would need these records to remain in business. It is likely that less than 10% of your records are essential. The purpose of identifying essential records is to plan for their protection.

After you have completed your records inventory, you will have assessed the value of your records and determined a retention period for them. This information will be used in the next step, which is to establish a records retention schedule.

## V. Records Retention Schedules

The basis of any good records management program is the implementation of well-developed records retention schedules. A *retention schedule* is a plan for the management of your records. It lists your entity's records and how long they should be kept. The purpose of a retention schedule is to provide continuing authority to dispose of or transfer records to the State Archives.

There are two methods of establishing a retention schedule for your entity: adopting the general schedule approved for your governmental entity or developing a specific schedule for your entity.

### Adopting and Using a General Schedule

As stated earlier, the State Archives website provides general records retention schedules for certain government entities and record types. These schedules identify common records series, their retention periods, and their data practices classifications.

Before you can begin disposing of records according to a general schedule, you must notify the State Archives (which serves as the contact for the state Records Disposition Panel) that your entity has officially adopted the general schedule. Some general schedules include a “notification of adoption” form. The State Archives (for the Minnesota Historical Society) will sign and return the notification form to you. As a service to entities, the State Archives will keep a copy of the notification form for future reference. You will then have the authority to dispose of your government records as indicated on the schedule. If the general schedule is updated, you will not have to adopt the new version; it is assumed that since you adopted the previous version you will now utilize the most recent revision.

You may adopt a general schedule even though your entity does not have all the records listed on it.

Retention periods listed on a general schedule represent the minimum amount of time that you must keep records. If you need to keep some records series longer than the listed retention, you should establish an entity policy for those records.

## **Records Not on a General Schedule**

Records not listed on a general schedule cannot be destroyed except by submitting and having approved either an “Application for Authority to Dispose of Records” (PR-1 form) or a “Minnesota Records Retention Schedule” form. Both forms are available on the State Archives website.

## **Records No Longer Created**

If, as a result of your inventory, you find records that are not on a general schedule, are no longer being created and have reached the end of their useful retention, permission to destroy them should be obtained by submitting an “Application for Authority to Dispose of Records” (PR-1 form). Instructions for completion are at the top of the form. When approved by the Records Disposition Panel, this application will give you authority to dispose of only those records listed on the form. The form is available online on the State Archives website.

## **Developing Your Own Retention Schedule**

Records in your office that are not on a general schedule but are still being created should be listed on a retention schedule. For your convenience, a blank form is available on the State Archives website. Instructions are provided on the form.

Submit the completed schedule to the State Archives, which will forward it on to the Legislative Auditor or State Auditor and the Attorney General (the other members of the Records Disposition Panel) for review and comment before your schedule is returned to you.

When you receive your schedule, review it carefully and note any changes made by the Records Disposition Panel. Questions regarding the changes should be directed to the member of the Panel who made the change.

## **Amending Your Agency Retention Schedule**

**Adding New Records Series:** As you create new records series not on your general schedule, develop another retention schedule for your entity listing only those new items. Follow the procedures listed under “Developing Your Own Retention Schedule” when compiling the records retention schedule.



**Changing the Retention:** After your schedule has been approved, the length of time you need to keep your records may change as a result of legislation or an administrative decision by your entity. When this occurs, a new retention schedule form must be submitted for those records. When the new schedule is returned to you, it will have a new retention schedule number and will supersede your current schedule for those items changed. When submitting the form, indicate that it is a revision and list the current retention schedule number. Be sure to clearly indicate which items are being revised and use the same item number(s) from the previously approved records series. Complete the schedule for the new retention period.

**Changing Record Format or Storage Media:** A records retention schedule applies to the official version of the record (also called the “copy of record”) within an agency, regardless of the format, unless the schedule specifies otherwise. For example, a retention period of “6 years” for accounts payable records would apply to all records within that series, even if some are in paper format, some are electronic, and some are on microfilm. You may change the format of a record, and still apply your normal retention period to the version that you consider to be your official copy of record. However, since many older retention schedules do specify particular media formats, it is a good practice to update your retention schedules when you make significant changes to the formats in which you maintain records. Consider changing your schedules to make them media-neutral to avoid confusion and help employees to apply the schedules appropriately. To ensure compliance with your schedules, you may wish to establish a separate policy which details the formats and storage media of official record types.

## VI. Preservation of Archival Records

An approved general records retention schedule, entity records retention schedule, or approved application to dispose of records is your authority to dispose of records when they have reached their retention period. Some historical records may have permanent archival value and may be transferred to the State Archives of the Minnesota Historical Society pursuant to M.S. 138.17. Other historical records may have permanent value and should be retained in the entity. Contact the State Archives for advice.

### Archival Records on Retention Schedules

The determination of whether or not a particular record series is archival and should ultimately be transferred to the State Archives is usually made at the time the retention schedule or application form is approved. Before the Minnesota Historical Society approves and signs the retention schedule, the Archives staff will study each series listed on the proposed schedule. If a particular item has potential archival value, it will be indicated on the retention schedule. This has already been done on the general schedules.

Two factors determine if a particular record series has archival value. Archives staff first consider whether the record has evidential value that documents the existence and operations of the state or local government entity.

These administrative and policy-documenting records form the basis of the entity’s archives, without which a proper history of the entity cannot be written. Examples of such basic archival records include annual/biennial reports; minutes of boards, commissions, or advisory bodies; newsletters and publications of the entity; and administrative correspondence of the entity’s head.

Archives staff should also consider whether the record in question has informational value over and above any evidentiary value. Informational value does not necessarily contribute to an understanding of how an entity functioned; however, it does contribute information that researchers will be able to use in future years. For example, court case files will contain information about specific individuals, events and practices that are of historical significance beyond what they might tell of how the court system functioned. Individual program files of an entity frequently have informational value.

When you have records that have been deemed archival that you no longer wish to retain in your office or storage area, contact the State Archives to make arrangements to have the records transferred. In some cases, the State Archives will supply boxes and instructions on how the records are to be packed; in other instances, staff will simply arrange for the transfer of the records.

If you have questions about which records are to be transferred, archives staff may visit your entity to inspect the records. Your entity, state or local, incurs no charge for this service.

The state Records Disposition Panel may approve the transfer of records to organizations and institutions other than the State Archives; for example, to local and county historical societies, museums or public libraries. To do this, you will have to address a number of legal and practical concerns. Please contact the State Archives for guidance.

After the records are transferred to the State Archives, they are arranged, inventoried, and shelved for future use, by the entity or by the public, consistent with Minnesota Historical Society access policies. During this arrangement process, certain non-archival material may be weeded out and disposed. Such material usually consists of duplicates, routine correspondence, drafts, or extraneous published material. Frequently, the retention schedule will be annotated to indicate that certain material is to be transferred to the State Archives for “selection and disposition.” This statement gives the State Archives permission to weed out items judged as non-archival. Such records can be returned to you if you so request at the time of transfer.

Occasionally an entity’s retention schedule will list a particular item as “permanent” in the entity. If that item is also listed as “archival,” it may be transferred to the State Archives when the entity no longer has need for it. In such cases, the State Archives does not have permission to dispose of any items without seeking the entity’s permission to do so. This situation frequently arises in the case of minutes, legal opinions or annual reports.

Once records are transferred to the State Archives, ownership of the records passes to the Minnesota Historical Society. Records are available for entity use during normal working hours. Use is encouraged and staff are available to assist in providing access.

For additional information about the State Archives or the services that it provides, contact the State Archives.

## **Records Not on Retention Schedules**

Occasionally, entities find inactive records stored in a basement, attic or closet for many years that were overlooked during the inventory process. Ideally, you should add these records to your retention schedule or list them on an “Application for Authority to Dispose of Records” (PR-1 form). If, however, this is not feasible, archives staff may be available to assist you in sorting through your inactive storage areas. This assistance may consist of separating the archival records from those of temporary value and advising you on how to obtain formal permission to dispose of the non-archival records. At that same time, some or all of the archival records may be transferred to the State Archives.

Transfers of records not listed on a retention schedule may be accomplished by the completion of a “Transfer of Records to State Archives” form (available on the State Archives website).

## **Records Conservation**

The Minnesota Historical Society has a documents conservation laboratory that repairs and restores records that have been damaged by inadequate storage, overuse or careless handling. Because of budgetary constraints, these services can be performed regularly only on archival records that are transferred to the custody of the State Archives.

If you have questions about the physical preservation of your records, you are encouraged to contact staff of the conservation laboratory (contact information provided in [Section IX](#)). In times of emergency, such as leaking water pipes or floods, the conservation staff is ready to give advice. Such assistance will be of most benefit if staff is contacted immediately upon recognition of the emergency. As with any emergency, a rapid and correct response will limit the loss of information and the costs involved in recovery.

## VII. Records Disposal

Your continuing authority (or permission) to dispose of records is your approved records retention schedule or "Application for Authority to Dispose of Records" (PR-1) form. According to M.S. 138.17, subd. 7, your agency must maintain a list of the records that are disposed. A form for this purpose, the "Records Destruction Report," is available on the State Archives web site.

When records containing data that is not public, as defined in M.S. 13.02, subd. 8a, are being disposed, the records must be destroyed in a way that prevents their contents from being determined.

### Methods of Destruction

No one specific method of destruction is prescribed. Local ordinances may dictate what procedures must be followed. Recycling or incineration is preferred. State agencies may contact the Minnesota State Government Resource Recovery Program for assistance with recycling records.

Caution should be used in the destruction of any records, especially those containing data that are not public. When records containing data that is not public, as defined in M.S. 13.02, subd. 8a, are being disposed, the records must be destroyed in a way that prevents their contents from being determined. Federal regulations require adequate safeguards be taken with security-classified records prior to their shredding or other method of destruction. Any records containing information that is not public should be properly stored until destruction.

## VIII. Setting up a Records Storage Area

Many records, because of their relatively short retention periods, will be disposed of directly from the office. Others will be retained in storage areas long after being removed from the office. The purpose of a records storage area is to keep inactive records out of high-cost office space by transferring them to a low-cost storage area. Inactive records are usually referred to less than once per month, but must be retained to satisfy records retention requirements.

The following are guidelines for setting up your storage areas.

### Storage Area Requirements

Records that are to be stored for extended periods of time prior to disposal require special storage conditions to prevent rapid deterioration or damage from fire, flood, or theft. Even greater care must be given to historical records that will be retained permanently.

Most entities start storing records in their offices. Typically, as the volume of records grows they are moved to spare closets, progressing to storage rooms or basements and eventually to a warehouse of some sort. Unfortunately, this process is sometimes done in a haphazard way, resulting in lost or damaged records. Before this happens, you should implement a system of centralized control for your inactive records. Centralized control allows one authority to oversee and maintain a records storage area in one location.

Ideally, records storage conditions should include:

1. **Security:** A secure records storage area is separated from public use areas and protected from unauthorized access. This area should have a controlled entrance and alarm system.
2. **Convenient Location:** A convenient on-site location reduces filing and searching time and allows easy access and retrieval.
3. **Proper Maintenance:** Records need adequate protection from water pipes, rodents, insects, dirt and other hazards. The storage areas should be kept clean and dust-free. The storage area should be located in a clean, fireproof building equipped with fire extinguishers and with stable temperature and humidity controls (65 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit, 45% to 50% relative humidity for paper). A fire-suppression system (sprinklers, etc.) is desirable.
4. **Adequate Floor Space:** Sturdy shelving and weight-bearing floors provide support for heavy boxes and easy access to the paper records they contain. Shelving with standard records storage boxes (12" x 15") and 30" aisles contribute to the greatest use of floor space. (Caution: if you have sprinklers in your storage area, do not stack boxes too high. State Fire Code requires 18" of space below sprinkler heads. See: Minnesota Administrative Rules, 7511.0315.3.1)
5. **Suitable Lighting and Ventilation:** Proper lighting helps prevent filing errors, enhances reference and promotes safety. Good ventilation improves employee efficiency and protects records from harmful substances. Both promote comfort, safety and effectiveness of personnel.
6. **Index and/or Layout of Shelving Arrangement:** A posted map or index of the layout of the filing system in the storage area simplifies reference.
7. **Written Transfer, Retrieval and Charge-Out Procedures:** A written policy listing procedures for transferring records to your storage area is essential. Documented procedures should identify who is responsible, where and how to obtain boxes, how to pack boxes, how often records are to be transferred, and how records can be retrieved. Consistent charge-out procedures require a good indexing system. Charge-out and follow-up controls ensure prompt return of the record.

Unfortunately, many entities are unable to provide this ideal environment. In such cases, make every effort to store records in standard-sized boxes, at least 6" above the floor, in a cool, dry and fire -resistant room that can be kept locked against unauthorized entry. Inexpensive exhaust fans and portable dehumidifiers will help to maintain an environment suitable for records storage.

Essential records – those vital to the continued operation of an entity in case of emergency -- require the safest and most secure storage area possible, preferably in a building separate from the office operation. Similarly, security copies of microfilm or computer media backups should be kept in a separate location.

## Records Center Index

The designated central authority for your entity's records should maintain an accurate, box-level index to the contents of each records storage center. The index may be in the form of a database, log, card file, or other inventory-control record. It is the key to an effective storage system. The index should contain:

- Box number (unique identifier)
- Shelf location

- Description of box contents, including date ranges
- Department/division which submitted the box
- Retention schedule item number for each box (which determines its retention period)
- Destruction review date (when records scheduled to be destroyed will be reviewed)

## Storage Containers

Inactive records are best stored in standard records storage cartons. These boxes are sturdy (a full one can weigh 40 pounds or more) and come in standard sizes. The most common is a “letter/legal” box, measuring 15” x 12” x 10”. Both letter-size and legal-size paper records fit in this storage container. Other sizes are available for special purposes, such as checks, rolled blueprints, X-rays, or microforms.

Each box should be labeled using a standard label format. Your label may include the same identifying information that is found in your storage index – box number, department, description, dates, etc. However, if the information in your boxes needs more security, you may choose to identify the originating department by a code rather than by name, and include only a box number and location, omitting any visible description of the box contents.

## Special Storage Needs

Keep in mind that non-paper formats, such as computer media, microfilm, audiotapes, etc. may require special storage conditions. Such non-paper media is usually best stored in a media vault. Vaults have their own temperature and humidity control standards, which are cooler and drier than the conditions that are acceptable for paper storage. If your storage areas are unsuitable for special media storage, you may consider using a commercial storage vendor who offers vault storage services.

## Commercial Records Centers

An alternative to setting up your own storage area is to contract with a commercial records center to provide storage, retrieval and disposal services for a fee. State and local government entities may find this service an efficient addition to their records storage policy.

There is a state contract in place for off-site commercial records storage. Contact the Department of Administration, Materials Management Division, for information about the state’s current vendor contract (see [section IX](#)).

# IX. Need More Information?

There are many resources available to assist you in establishing and maintaining government information and records management programs. Here are just a few.

## Minnesota Statutes and Rules Related to Records Management and Data Practices

Several citations for Minnesota Statutes or Minnesota Rules have been noted in this publication. The full text of the current statutes and rules can be found online at the *Minnesota Office of the Revisor of Statutes* website at: [www.revisor.mn.gov](http://www.revisor.mn.gov)

## Data Practices

**Minnesota Department of Administration  
Office of Data Practices and Open Meetings (formerly Information Policy Analysis  
Division)**

201 Administration Building  
50 Sherburne Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55155  
Email: [info.ipad@state.mn.us](mailto:info.ipad@state.mn.us)  
Voice: 1-800-657-3721 or 651-296-6733  
<http://mn.gov/admin/government/data-info/>

Other helpful sources are the legal counsel for your organization or the coordinating organizations for governmental units, such as the League of Minnesota Cities, the Association of Minnesota Counties, or the Minnesota School Boards Association (contact information below).

## Records Retention Schedules

**State Records Disposition Panel**  
First contact is the **Minnesota State Archives**  
Email: [statearchives@mnhs.org](mailto:statearchives@mnhs.org)  
651-259-3260

The following general records retention schedules are available online at [www.mnhs.org/statearchives](http://www.mnhs.org/statearchives)

- Counties
- Cities
- Townships
- School Districts
- District Courts
- State Agencies:
  - Financial
  - Human Resources
  - State Property Management
- Minnesota Firefighters Relief Associations (MFRA)

More information about the Records Disposition Panel is available here: [www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/recordspanel.php](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/recordspanel.php)

## Records-Related Forms

The following forms are available online from the **Minnesota State Archives** [www.mnhs.org/statearchives](http://www.mnhs.org/statearchives)

- Records Retention Schedule form
- Application for the Authority to Dispose of Records (PR-1)
- Transfer of Paper Records to State Archives
- Transfer of Electronic Records to the State Archives
- Government Records Depository Agreement (with local or county historical societies)
- Records Inventory Worksheet
- Electronic Records Inventory Worksheet
- Records Destruction Report

## Records Storage and Destruction

### ***Minnesota Department of Administration, Materials Management Division***

State contract for records storage:

[www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us](http://www.mmd.admin.state.mn.us)

A professional association for the records storage industry is PRISM International. Their website contains information about commercial records centers, including a checklist for evaluating a facility. Their website address is: [www.prismintl.org/](http://www.prismintl.org/)

## Disaster Recovery Assistance

### ***Minnesota Historical Society***

#### ***Conservation Department***

345 Kellogg Boulevard West

St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

Voice: 1-800-657-3773 or 651-259-3388

Email: [conservationhelp@mnhs.org](mailto:conservationhelp@mnhs.org)

[www.mnhs.org/conservation](http://www.mnhs.org/conservation)

## Archival Records Preservation

### ***Minnesota Historical Society***

#### ***Minnesota State Archives***

345 Kellogg Boulevard West

St. Paul, MN 55102-1906

Email: [statearchives@mnhs.org](mailto:statearchives@mnhs.org)

Voice: 651-259-3260

Fax: 651-296-9961

[www.mnhs.org/statearchives](http://www.mnhs.org/statearchives)

### ***National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)***

[www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)

## Organizations for Government Entities

- Cities  
***League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)***  
Research service phone: 651-281-1200  
[www.lmc.org/](http://www.lmc.org/)
- Counties  
***Association of Minnesota Counties (AMC)***  
651-224-3344  
[www.mncounties.org](http://www.mncounties.org)
- Courts  
***Minnesota Judicial Branch***  
[www.mncourts.gov](http://www.mncourts.gov)
- Schools  
***Minnesota School Boards Association*** [www.mnmsba.org](http://www.mnmsba.org)  
***Minnesota Association of School Business Officials***, [www.mnasbo.org](http://www.mnasbo.org)

**Minnesota Department of Education** [education.state.mn.us/MDE/index.html](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/index.html)

FAQ on record retention and records retention schedules:  
[education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/sped/caga/du/055464](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/dse/sped/caga/du/055464)

**Minnesota Association of Charter Schools** <http://www.mncharterschools.org/>

- Townships  
**Minnesota Association of Townships**  
763-497-2330  
[www.mntownships.org/](http://www.mntownships.org/)
- State Agencies  
State agency staff should consult with their own records manager.
- State Records Disposition Panel  
For inquiries concerning the files (including records retention schedules) of the panel, contact the **Minnesota State Archives** at 651-259-3260 or email [statearchives@mnhs.org](mailto:statearchives@mnhs.org)

For more information about the Panel, please see this section of the State Archives website:  
[www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/recordspanel.php](http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/recordspanel.php)

## Information and Records Management Associations

The **Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International** is a source of information on records management programs, people and resources. This professional association sponsors seminars and workshops and distributes a quarterly publication and monthly newsletter. Their website address is: [www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org). The website for the Twin Cities Chapter is: [twincitiesarma.org/](http://twincitiesarma.org/)

The **Minnesota Government Records and Information Network (MNGRIN)** provides a forum for the exchange of information among individuals and entities interested in government records and information management. The group meets monthly in the Twin Cities metropolitan area. MNGRIN's web site is: [sites.google.com/site/mngrin/](http://sites.google.com/site/mngrin/)

**AIIM - The Enterprise Content Management Association** has been a neutral and unbiased source for helping individuals and organizations understand the challenges associated with managing documents, content, records, and business processes. Its website is: [www.aiim.org](http://www.aiim.org). The Minnesota chapter website is available through: [www.aiim.org/chapters](http://www.aiim.org/chapters)

The professional forms management organization is the **Business Forms Management Association (BFMA)**, which sponsors seminars and workshops and distributes a quarterly publication and bimonthly newsletter. Contact them at: [www.bfma.org](http://www.bfma.org)

## Other Resources

**Minnesota Management and Budget (MMB)** – Formerly the Department of Finance and Department of Employee Relations (DOER) [www.mn.gov/mmb/](http://www.mn.gov/mmb/)

- Fiscal retention schedule: [mn.gov/mmb/assets/SW-retention-fin\\_tcm1059-129731.pdf](http://mn.gov/mmb/assets/SW-retention-fin_tcm1059-129731.pdf)

**League of Minnesota Cities – Handbook for Minnesota Cities – Chapter 27: Records Management**  
[www.lmc.org/media/document/1/chapter27.pdf?inline=true](http://www.lmc.org/media/document/1/chapter27.pdf?inline=true)



Other resources, including records management guidelines, the state's recordkeeping metadata standard, and links to related organizations, may be found on the Minnesota State Archives website: [www.mnhs.org/statearchives](http://www.mnhs.org/statearchives)