

Retention and Disposition of Official and Transitory Records

Data, Information and Privacy Services Division, Data, Information and Records Services Branch

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Approved by: Sheri Binges, Executive Director, Data, Information and Records Services Branch	Owner: Sheri Binges, Executive Director, Data, Information and Records Services Branch	
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Contact: Sa.InformationManagement@gov.ab.ca	Policy Instrument type: Guideline	

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Guideline Statement

The intent of this guideline is to:

- educate and empower government staff to appropriately dispose of transitory records; and
- communicate the requirements and procedures that government staff must follow for the retention and disposition of official records.

This guide supports the [Official and Transitory Records Directive](#).

Authority

- [Government Organization Act](#)
- [Records Management Regulation](#)

Scope

This guideline applies to all departments defined under section 14 of Schedule 11 of the *Government Organization Act* and agencies, boards, and commissions as defined in Schedule 1 of the [Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulation](#).

Agencies, boards, and commissions that are not contained within Schedule 1 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Regulation are encouraged to align with this guideline.

Guideline Description

This guideline is designed to assist Government of Alberta staff (which includes, but is not limited to, employees, contractors, volunteers, appointees, interns, and students working with a public body) with understanding retention and disposition activities related to official and transitory records.

Regardless of whether a record is classified as transitory or official, all records must be managed in accordance with government information management policy instruments (e.g., relevant records retention and disposition schedule, etc.).

Guideline Specification

All records in the custody and/or under the control of the Government of Alberta must be retained and disposed of in accordance with approved records retention and disposition schedules.

For further information on retention and disposition activities, please contact the appropriate Senior Records Officer.

Retention

Transitory and official records are retained and dispositioned based on the requirements of the relevant records retention and disposition schedule.

A records retention and disposition schedule (“retention schedule”) is a legal document that outlines how long records are to be kept, where they are to be kept, and what their final disposition will be. The total retention period should be the minimum amount of time required to satisfy legal, financial, and business requirements.

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Closure criteria, (i.e., the closure trigger) is the event or business rule that signifies the record is closed and the retention period starts (e.g., the closure criteria for some financial records is fiscal year end, the closure criteria for some policy instruments is publication, etc.).

- For **transitory records**, the closure criteria is satisfied when the record no longer serves a function or purpose.
- For **official records**, determining and enacting closure criteria is the responsibility of the information controller in collaboration with the Transfers, Storage and Disposition (TSD) team.

Transitory Records Retention

There is no legal obligation or requirement to maintain transitory records once they are no longer required. Maintaining transitory records indefinitely presents a risk—risk of accidental disclosure, information loss, and substantial increase in the resources necessary to manage records (including, but not limited to, responding to litigation or information access requests made under the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*).

Official Records Retention

The retention of official records is based on the requirements of the relevant retention schedule for that business function and/or activity. Once a record has been classified as official, it must be retained in an official information management system, and remain accessible to the relevant business area for the full duration of the retention period.

Disposition

Disposition is the final activity for records that have met their full records retention period. Disposition can be identified as Archives (i.e., the records are moved to the Provincial Archives of Alberta for permanent preservation), Destroy (i.e., the records are securely destroyed or deleted), or Transfer (i.e., the records are alienated and transferred to appropriate custodian).

NOTE: Records eligible for final disposition based on the relevant records retention and disposition schedule must be reviewed prior to disposition for responsiveness to active and/or reasonably anticipated litigation and/or access to information requests. If records are on hold due to litigation or reasonably anticipated litigation or because they are the subject of a FOIP access to information request, they must be retained until the hold is lifted.

Secure Records Disposition

The final disposition for all **transitory records** is “Destroy”. The [Transitory Records Schedule](#) delegates authority to destroy or delete **transitory records** to all government staff.

Electronic transitory records can be securely disposed of by deleting them from their storage location; deleted records then move to the digital recycle bin or deleted items folder. Physical (i.e., paper) transitory records can be securely disposed of via the Transitory Records Program operated by TSD. This program ensures:

- transitory locked bins (located in most business areas) are made available for the secure disposal of smaller amounts of transitory records; and
- larger volumes of boxed transitory records can be transferred to an off-site location for secure shredding.

Physical transitory records are not considered securely disposed of until they are placed in a transitory locked bin.

Electronic transitory records in digital recycle bins (e.g., SharePoint, Outlook, OneDrive) are not considered securely disposed of unless the recycle bin has been emptied.

For information about the Transitory Records Program, contact TSD.

Official records must be securely disposed of by TSD in accordance with relevant records retention and disposition schedules. Official records disposition activities are completed by TSD in consultation with business area staff, information controllers, system and/or application administrators, and Senior Records Officers (SROs) as required.

For information about preparing official records for final disposition, contact TSD.

Reasonable Recovery

If records have been disposed of, but have not yet gone through the full disposition process (i.e., not yet securely destroyed), there is an expectation of “reasonable recovery” in the event of an information access request and/or litigation hold. Transitory records that can be reasonably recovered must be restored and reviewed for potentially responsive records.

Physical transitory records are considered reasonably recoverable if they have not yet been placed in the transitory locked bin and/or sent to the Alberta Records Centre (ARC). **Electronic transitory records may be reasonably recoverable if they** have been deleted but are still located in the digital recycle bin and/or deleted items folder.

Compliance

Consequences of non-compliance with this standard could result in the loss of information, damage to Government of Alberta’s reputation, exposure of Albertans to harm and/or incurrence of unnecessary costs (including the risk of not being able to respond appropriately to a claim in court). Depending on the severity of non-compliance:

- either informal or formal requests and/or follow-ups may be made by Data, Information and Privacy Services Division, Corporate Internal Audit Services, Cybersecurity Services, Office of the Information Privacy Commissioner, Office of the Auditor General and/or Public Service Commission, and
- legislated disciplinary action (i.e., *Public Service Act*) may be taken.

Supporting Resources

- [Data and Information Security Classification Standard](#)
- [Official and Transitory Records Directive](#)
- [Identifying Official and Transitory Records Guideline](#)
- [Safeguarding Government Information Guide](#)

RETENTION AND DISPOSITION OF OFFICIAL AND TRANSITORY RECORDS

Contact

Subject	When to Contact	Contact
Information Management	If you have inquiries on how to manage government information.	Senior Records Officers Contact List
Information Access and Privacy	If you have inquiries regarding personal information and/or the protection of privacy.	FOIP Office or Coordinator Lookup
Cybersecurity Services	If you have inquiries regarding information security.	Sector Information Security Officers Contact List
Transfers, Storage and Disposition	If you have inquires about records transfers, storage and/or disposition.	Transfers, Storage and Disposition Contact