



Office of the Secretary of State
Washington State Archives

Records Management Advice

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Using Records Retention Schedules: Notorious/Historically Significant Legal Case Files

Purpose: Provide guidance to agency attorneys on the identification and retention of notorious/historically significant case files.

The *Prosecuting Attorney Records Retention Schedule* includes a records series with an “Archival – Permanent Retention” designation that covers notorious and historically significant case files as *defined by the local government agency* (DAN AT2013-009).

Cases include civil, criminal, juvenile offender, or any other type of case.

The following list provides criteria that should be considered when evaluating whether case files should be considered notorious or historically significant:

- Did the case attain contemporary public notoriety?
- Did the case receive significant media coverage?
- Did the case cause local agencies to develop or utilize new methods or technologies?
- Is the case frequently cited in scholarly or professional literature or other resources?
- Has the case caused a change in policies or laws?
- Did the case affect a large portion of the community?
- Was the case controversial?
- Was the case generally viewed by the community as important or significant?
- Was the defendant acquitted of serious charges on grounds of insanity?
- Was the case a three-strikes/life imprisonment or death penalty case?
- Was the case the subject of a well-known book or feature film?
- Did the case incur large restitution amounts?

If a case meets one or more of the above criteria, it must not be destroyed. Instead, the agency should contact Washington State Archives to arrange for archival transfer.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**

**www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov**