



Destroying Non-Archival Records: Documenting the Destruction of Public Records

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on how to appropriately document the destruction of public records.

While agencies are not required by statute to maintain a destruction log, documenting destruction promotes both transparency and accountability.

In the event of a legal or audit challenge, this documentation provides crucial evidence of “defensible disposition,” demonstrating that the agency was aware of and compliant with current records retention requirements *at the time that the records were destroyed*.

Washington State Archives strongly recommends that agencies document the destruction of all public records except for those whose minimum retention is “Until no longer needed for agency business”.

What information do I need to include in my destruction log?

Logs should document the destruction of records regardless of format.

At a minimum, the log should include:

- Disposition Authority Number (DAN) of the record series being destroyed;
- Title/name of the record series;
- Date range of the records being destroyed (start date to end date); and,
- Date of destruction.

To further enhance transparency and accountability, it is helpful to provide:

- Type and quantity of media being destroyed (e.g., 1,200 emails, one 375-page bound volume, 3 cu. ft. boxes of paper, 10 CDs, etc.);
- Signatures/approval from those creating the log and authorizing the destruction.

Destruction logs are to be retained for 50 years in accordance with Destruction/Transfer of Records (DAN GS 11001/GS50-09-06) in the *State Government General Records Retention Schedule / Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)*.

Further information on appropriate destruction methods as well as a sample destruction logs (which agencies may use and adapt for their own use) is available from Washington State Archives’ website.

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