

Electronic Records Management: How Long Do Backups Need to Be Kept?

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government entities on the retention of routine backups of electronic records.

“An agency is responsible for a security backup of active records. A security backup must be compatible with the current system configuration in use by the agency.” (WAC 434-662-040)

Backups need to be kept until there is no longer an agency business need for them, because:

- Backups serve as a disaster preparedness strategy. Each agency determines the frequency at which backups are made.
- If an agency would not restore a system or record from an out-of-date backup, then there is no need to retain that backup.

Backups can be destroyed in accordance with:

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY NUMBER (DAN)	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	RETENTION AND DISPOSITION ACTION	DESIGNATION
GS 14011 Rev. 1 (for State Government Agencies)	Backups for Disaster Preparedness/Recovery Routine/cyclical backups of IT systems and data for the purposes of disaster preparedness and recovery. <i>State Government General Records Retention Schedule</i>	Retain until no longer needed for agency business <i>then</i> Destroy.	NON-ARCHIVAL ESSENTIAL OFM
GS50-06A-02 Rev. 1 (for Local Government Agencies)	Backups for Disaster Preparedness/Recovery Routine, cyclical backups of the agency’s electronic records created for the purpose of disaster preparedness and recovery. <i>Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)</i>	Retain until no longer needed for agency business <i>then</i> Destroy.	NON-ARCHIVAL ESSENTIAL OFM

BACKUPS SHOULD NOT BE USED AS A LONG-TERM STORAGE SOLUTION FOR ELECTRONIC RECORDS

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

www.sos.wa.gov/archives
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