



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

Purpose: Help state and local government agencies with 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 are kept until they are no longer needed for agency business, because:

- Backups serve as a disaster preparedness strategy. Each agency determines the frequency with 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- If an agency would not restore a system or record from an out-of-date backup, then there is no need to retain that backup.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. 2 / GS50-06A-02 Rev. 2	<i>Backups for Disaster Preparedness/Recovery</i> Routine backups of IT systems and data for disaster preparedness and recovery.	Retain until no longer needed for agency business <i>then</i> Destroy.	NON-ARCHIVAL ESSENTIAL (for Disaster Recovery) OFM

Source: *State Government General Records Retention Schedule* and *Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)* (available from Washington State Archives' website).

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
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov