Electronic Records Management:
Meat Cleaver Method for Bulk Email Clean-Up

Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on the meat cleaver method for bulk email clean-up.

The meat cleaver method can be used to destroy emails in bulk ONLY if all long-term emails have already been identified and retained separately. The meat cleaver approach is very simple and can be used to destroy emails not identified and isolated through search and destroy.

Step 1: Identify the longest retention period of the remaining emails. Ideally, this will be roughly 10 years or less. If the longest retention period is more than 10 years, you may want to spend more time weeding out longer term emails using the search and destroy method.

Step 2: Apply the longest retention period to ALL the remaining emails. For instance, if the longest retention period is 6 years, assume that EVERY email has a 6-year retention.

Step 3: Delete all emails older than the longest retention period. Make sure to log this destruction and list any DAN's that might apply to the records being destroyed.

Step 4: Finally, plan to destroy the oldest year of emails once annually until the remaining emails have all been destroyed.