## Electronic Records Management:
## Search and Destroy Method for Bulk Email Clean-Up

**Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local government agencies on the search & destroy method for bulk email clean-up.**

The search and destroy method can be used to destroy similar emails in bulk by using specific keywords and phrases that will return *only* the target emails that the agency wishes to destroy. The goal is to pare down the number of unidentified or unmanaged emails in the backlog. It's unlikely that all emails will be identified and isolated using keywords so this should be used in combination with other methods of email identification and destruction.

Agencies should conduct a sampling analysis of their email backlog to create a list of keywords or phrases for searching. Avoid using ambiguous keywords that might return more than the targeted emails. For instance, searching "Seahawks" will return emails discussing the Seahawks but it will also return every email with "Go Seahawks!" in the signature block. Consider using E-Discovery software to develop more complex search queries.

Divide the email backlog into groups based on department or work unit to minimize the risk of emails getting lumped in with the wrong retention group. If only one department uses a specific word or phrase, search the emails from only that department in case the same word or phrase happens to be used in a different context by other departments. The backlog could also be divided by year to target temporary projects or to account for staff who have held multiple positions in multiple departments.

Prioritize identifying archival, long-term, or especially voluminous groups of email. If the agency can be sure that all long-term and archival emails have been removed from the bulk, any records not identified through the search and destroy method can then be bundled and destroyed using the meat cleaver method.

The same keywords can also be used by all-staff to identify and destroy emails in their current inboxes. Send out a couple of keywords each month to all staff and ask them to clean their inboxes of emails returned using those keywords. This technique is especially useful to get staff in the habit of regularly cleaning out transitory emails. See our advice sheet, [Examples of Common Records with Minimal Retention](#), for inspiration when compiling a list of keywords designed to target transitory emails.

Agency Logo

**AGENCY RECORDS CLEAN-UP/MIGRATION PROJECT**

**AUTHORIZATION FOR DELETION/DESTRUCTON (Transitory and Secondary/Duplicate Copies)**

I, _____ verify that the following file(s) and drives have been properly reviewed according to the agency and state records and information policy and approved retention schedules and either contain *only transitory records or are secondary/duplicate copies or cc's not requiring action on my part and can therefore be deleted.*

I have removed all official business records from the files/drives and have:

- Saved them under the appropriate file folder/repository on agency network drive; OR
- Moved them into authorized agency email storage repository; OR
- Moved them into another designated agency recordkeeping application (ECM).

I have deleted or have authorized the deletion and destruction of the following:

| DATE RANGE | Records Description/Title | Location | DAN Number |
|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

Key words used to search for appropriate disposition for above list:

| | | |
|---|---|---|
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|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

I attest that the above records are NOT affected by an open and active litigation hold or part of an open public records request or discovery.

Attested by _____

Name/Title _____

Date of Destruction _____

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

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