

# 10 Commandments of Records Management

Records management responsibilities, as defined in statutes, regulations, and Agency policy, can be distilled down to the following ten tasks. The Agency, its Program Offices, Staff, and Agents must:

1. Identify the functions and activities for which each program is responsible and determine what records are needed to document those activities and functions.
2. Create sufficient records to document those activities and functions.
3. Maintain those records in a way that allows all persons who need access to find and retrieve what they need.
4. Remove or destroy records only with authorization; don't retain records authorized for destruction.
5. Keep official records separate from non-record materials.
6. Make someone responsible for the records program.
7. Transfer records identified as permanent to the National Archives as required.
8. Protect vital records appropriate to their value.
9. Protect records that contain security classified, confidential business, or other types of sensitive information with appropriate safeguards.
10. Do all of this in a manner that is as cost effective as possible.

This is all we "have to do" in records management. Everything else is either:

- Definition of terms
- Procedures for consistently carrying out those ten steps
- Sample best practices (don't reinvent the wheel).

The purpose of the 10 commandments exercise is to focus on what is really important and to simplify the message. Records management is an important management concept. It can be distilled down to a few basic ideas, but like any other resources management, there is regular repetitive work that has to be done, just as we need regular property inventories, regular employee evaluations, and regular financial accounting.