

CHAPTER 9

FILES DISPOSITION - RECORDS SCHEDULING

1. **GENERAL.** Disposition means the disposal (destruction), retirement, transfer, or conversion to other forms, such as microforms, of records.
 - a. **Records Disposal Schedules.** All prior Agency disposal schedules have been superseded by this Handbook.
 - b. **Yearly Review of Records.** Before the beginning of the next fiscal year, file custodians will review all files in their custody, and segregate those files which will be eligible for retirement, disposal, or other disposition at the end of the fiscal year. The simplest method of segregating files is to group them by category: nonrecords, records of limited retention, and permanent.
2. **DISPOSITION EXPLAINED.** Disposition includes the retirement, transfer, or destruction of records.
 - a. **Retirement.** Records are considered "retired" when they are sent to a designated Federal Records Center (FRC) for storage, servicing, and ultimate destruction or retention.
 - b. **Transfer.** Disposition includes the transfer or a change of custody of records from one organization or agency to another. Records are considered "retired" when they are transferred to a records center. Records may be transferred to another office as a result of the realignment of functions or reorganization or retired to a records center without prior approval. However, any other transfer of records to another office or agency must be approved by the Forms, Issuances, and Records Management Services Center (FIRM).
 - c. **Destruction.** The destruction of records includes the physical destruction of the record material itself or the removal of the informational content. Records authorized for destruction by this Handbook will be:
 - (1) Placed in wastebaskets when the quantity is small and the records are unclassified. Consider selling as waste paper any large quantity of records eligible for destruction.
 - (2) Destroyed by pulping, burning, or macerating if, in the opinion of the FIRM, this action is necessary to avoid disclosure of information that might be prejudicial to the Agency, the public, or private interest.

- (3) Erased and reused, if appropriate, when the record consists of magnetic tape or comparable media.

3. DISPOSITION STANDARDS.

a. **Authority.** Federal law requires proper authorization by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) to destroy Government records. Authorization for the destruction of records is contained in the Agency records disposition schedules. The schedules provide for the selective retention of records of continuing value and the destruction of records of temporary value after the expiration of a specified period of time or upon the occurrence of a specific event. The retirement procedures in Chapter 10 provide instructions for moving inactive and semi-active records from office space to low cost storage facilities.

- (1) **Official Records.** Official records will **NOT** be destroyed unless they meet the provisions of the disposal schedules in this Handbook.

- (2) **Nonrecord Material.** Non-record material may be destroyed when its purpose is served. To control the accumulation of nonrecord material, disposal standards identifying specific kinds of material are included in Chapter 11. These standards establish the maximum retention period for different types of nonrecord material.

b. **Arrangement of Disposition Standards.** The records disposition schedules are arranged as follows:

- (1) Part 1 contains schedules for records common to most offices, such as office administrative files, nonrecord material, and program correspondence files. These items will be used by all offices.

- (2) Part 2 contains schedules arranged according to primary functions of the Agency. The schedules are established according to the function to which the files relate and not according to the organization which creates or maintains the file.

c. **Numbering.** The numbers assigned to the disposition schedules serve both as an identification of the file series and as an abbreviation of the disposition authority. All file series relating to the same functional area are grouped together. The specific schedule number is derived from the internal arrangement and the sequence in which the schedules appear.

d. **Application for Review of Schedules.** Each headquarters and regional office is responsible for ensuring compliance with the provisions of records disposition schedules and ascertaining that all records of the organization are covered by appropriate disposal instructions. Each office will review its files at least

annually followed.

to determine whether the applicable schedules are adequate and being

- (1) **Additions, Deletions, and Changes.** Recommendations to add, delete, or change records disposition schedules will be made when annual reviews disclose:
 - (a) Record series not covered by the schedules.
 - (b) Items that should be deleted from the schedules because the records involved are no longer being created or maintained.
 - (c) Retention periods which need to be changed. Changes should be recommended only when the need is clearly indicated and justified.
- (2) **Submission of Revisions.** Proposed disposition schedule revisions will be submitted to the FIRM. Recommendations should contain the following information:
 - (a) Organizational unit(s) accumulating the records.
 - (b) A clear and meaningful description of the records, including the purpose for which the records were created, their relationship to the program activities of the unit creating them, and their relationship with other records, including duplication elsewhere in content or in substance.
 - (3) A proposed period of retention no longer than necessary to satisfy normal administrative, historical, legal, and fiscal requirements, with full justification for the retention period. If the retention period proposed is longer than that for which the records are in active use, the recommendation should provide for their transfer to an FRC.
- e. **Representative Samples of Paper Records.** Representative samples of paper records recommended for destruction or permanent retention will be submitted with the related recommendations. Samples will not be returned unless requested.

- f. **Review, Coordination, and Evaluation.** The FIRM will review, coordinate, and evaluate the information furnished for conformity with established policies and regulations. If the decision is made to add or change a disposition schedule, FIRM will take necessary action to obtain approval for the disposal authority. Unless the record is unique to one office, requests for changes or additions to a disposition standard will be written to cover identical records Agency-wide. Additions or changes to schedules will be published as numbered changes to this Handbook. Records recommended for disposal will not be destroyed until such specific changes are issued.

4. FILES CUTOFF PROCEDURES.

Definition and Objectives.

- (1) **Segregation of Active and Inactive Files.** Files "cutoff" is the segregation of active and inactive files. Established periodic cutoff of files is essential to effectively control record accumulations and their growth and to facilitate economical disposition in convenient blocks. At least annually, record keepers will cutoff files and segregate inactive files from active files; dispose of files eligible for retirement or destruction; and destroy all noncurrent technical reference material.
- (2) **Control of Size of the File.** Cutting-off files is important because it controls the size of the file. If not cutoff periodically, folder contents will grow until individual papers become hard to find. If the files are cutoff periodically, older files can be progressively moved from active files space to storage space as their reference activity declines.
- (3) **Cutoff Standards.** Prescribed cutoff instructions are included in records disposition schedules, where applicable. Cutoff standards are based on the following criteria for the various types of records:
- (a) **Chronological Sequence Files.** Chronological sequence files, such as accounting records, are filed by period of account (fiscal year) and lend themselves to cutoff procedures. Chronologically arranged records can be readily cutoff and retired in convenient blocks.
- (b) **Subject Files.** Subject files must be cutoff at planned intervals. There is no natural cutoff point such as occurs with case files or chronologically arranged records. Subject files are usually maintained on a fiscal or calendar year basis.

- (c) Case or Project Files. Case or project files are often cutoff upon the termination of a transaction or expiration of an event, such as separation of personnel, final contract payment, or completion of project.

When closed, the case file should be marked with the date of closing and placed in an inactive file apart from the active files. The inactive files then can be retired or destroyed in convenient fiscal year blocks.

Case files that continue over a long span of years can be cutoff by setting up a new folder each year and retiring the prior year folders, which have little reference activity.

- have (d) Technical Reference Materials. Technical reference materials no established cutoff and are destroyed when they are superseded, obsolete, or no longer needed. These files should be reviewed at least annually to determine if they are current and still useful.