COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS

RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULE

Issued By:

North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

Division of Archives and Records

Government Records Section

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APPROVAL

2026 County Register of Deeds Records Retention and Disposition Schedule

The records retention and disposition schedules and retention periods governing the records series listed herein are hereby approved. This approval extends to and includes the program operational records in the **2026 County Register of Deeds Records Retention and Disposition Schedule**:

10. Land and Property Records
11. License, Oath, and Registration Records
12. Marriage and Vital Statistic Records
13. Miscellaneous Records
14. Inactive Records

In accordance with the provisions of Chapters 121 and 132 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, it is agreed that the records do not and will not have further use or value for official business, research, or reference purposes after the respective retention periods specified herein and are authorized to be destroyed or otherwise disposed of by the agency or official having custody of them without further reference to or approval of either party to this agreement.

Destructions

G.S. § 121-5 authorizes the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) to regulate the destruction of public records. Furthermore, the local government agency agrees to comply with 07 NCAC 04M .0510 when deciding on a method of destruction. The North Carolina Administrative Code states:

> "(a) When used in an approved records retention and disposition schedule, the provision that paper records are to be destroyed means that the records shall be:
>
> 1. burned, unless prohibited by local ordinance;
> 2. shredded or torn so as to destroy the record content of the documents or material concerned;
> 3. placed in acid vats so as to reduce the paper to pulp and to terminate the existence of the documents or materials concerned; or
> 4. sold as waste paper, provided that the purchaser agrees in writing that the documents or materials concerned will not be resold without pulverizing or shredding the documents so that the information contained within cannot be practicably read or reconstructed.

(b) When used in an approved records retention and disposition schedule, the provision that electronic records are to be destroyed means that the data and metadata are to be overwritten, deleted, and unlinked so the data and metadata may not be practicably reconstructed.

(c) When used in an approved records retention and disposition schedule, the provision that confidential records of any format are to be destroyed means the data, metadata, and physical media are to be destroyed in such a manner that the information cannot be read or reconstructed under any means."

All local government agencies should maintain logs of their destructions either in the minutes of their governing board or in their Records Management file. Confidential records will be destroyed in such a manner that the records cannot be practicably read or reconstructed.

Public records, including electronic records, not listed in this schedule are not authorized to be destroyed.

Audits and Litigation Actions

Records subject to audit or those legally required for ongoing official proceedings must be retained until released from such audits or official proceedings, notwithstanding the instructions of this schedule.

Electronic Records

All local government agencies and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources concur that the long-term and/or permanent preservation of electronic records requires additional commitment and active management by the agency. Agencies agree to comply with all policies, standards, and best practices published by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources regarding the creation and management of electronic records.

Local government agencies should consider retention requirements and disposition authorities when designing and implementing electronic records management systems. Any type of electronically-created or electronically-stored information falls under the North Carolina General Assembly's definition of public records cited above. For example, e-mail, text messages, blog posts, voicemails, websites, word processing documents, spreadsheets, databases, and PDFs all fall within this definition of public records. In addition, G.S. § 132-6.1(a) specifies:

"Databases purchased, leased, created, or otherwise acquired by every public agency containing public records shall be designed and maintained in a manner that does not impair or impede the public agency's ability to permit the public inspection and examination of public records and provides a means of obtaining copies of such records. Nothing in this subsection shall be construed to require the retention by the public agency of obsolete hardware or software."

Local government agencies may scan any paper record and retain it electronically for ease of retrieval. If an agency wishes to destroy the original paper records before their assigned retention periods have been met, the agency must establish an electronic records policy, including putting into place procedures for quality assurance and documentation of authorization for records destructions approved by the Government Records Section. This electronic records policy and releases for destruction of records must be approved by the Government Records Section.

Agencies should be aware that for the purpose of any audit, litigation, or public records request, they are considered the records custodian obligated to produce requested records, even if said records are being maintained electronically by an outside vendor. Therefore, contracts regarding electronically stored information should be carefully negotiated to specify how records can be exported in case a vendor goes out of business or the agency decides to award the contract to a different vendor.

Reference Copies

All local government agencies and the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources agree that certain records series possess only brief administrative, fiscal, legal, research, and reference value. These records series have been designated by retention periods that allow these records to be destroyed when "reference value ends." All local government agencies hereby agree that they will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." If a local government agency does not establish internal policies and retention periods, the local government agency is not complying with the provisions of this retention schedule and is not authorized by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources to destroy the records with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends."

Record Copy

A record copy is defined as "The single copy of a document, often the original, that is designated as the official copy for reference and preservation."[1] The record copy is the one whose retention and disposition is mandated by this schedule; all additional copies are considered reference or access copies and can be destroyed when their usefulness expires. In some cases, postings to social media may be unofficial copies of information that is captured elsewhere as a record copy (e.g., a press release about an upcoming agency event that is copied to various social media platforms). Appropriately retaining record copies and disposing of reference copies requires agencies to designate clearly what position or office is required to maintain an official record for the duration of its designated retention period.

Transitory Records

North Carolina has a broad definition of public records. However, the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources recognizes that some records may have little or no long-term documentary or evidential value to the creating agency. These records are often called

[1] Society of American Archivists, *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*.

transitory records. They may be disposed of according to the guidance below. However, all public employees should be familiar with their appropriate retention schedule and any other applicable guidelines for their office. If there is a required retention period for these records, that requirement must be followed. When in doubt about whether a record is transitory or whether it has special significance or importance, retain the record in question and seek guidance from a DNCR records analyst.

Routing slips and transmittal sheets adding no information to that contained in the transmitted material have minimal value after the material has been successfully transmitted. These records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of after receipt of the material has been confirmed. Similarly, "while you were out" slips, memory aids, and other records requesting follow-up actions (including voicemails and calendar invites) have minimal value once the official action these records are supporting has been completed and documented. These records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of once the action has been resolved.

Drafts and working papers, including notes and calculations, are materials gathered or created to assist in the creation of another record. All drafts and working papers are public records subject to all provisions of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes, but many of them have minimal value after the final version of the record has been approved, and may be destroyed after final approval, if they are no longer necessary to support the analysis or conclusions of the official record. Drafts and working documents that may be destroyed after final approval include:

- Drafts and working papers for internal and external policies
- Drafts and working papers for internal administrative reports, such as daily and monthly activity reports;
- Drafts and working papers for internal, non-policy-level documents, such as informal workflows and manuals; and
- Drafts and working papers for presentations, workshops, and other explanations of agency policy that is already formally documented.

Forms used solely to create, update, or modify records in an electronic medium may be destroyed in office after completion of data entry and after all verification and quality control procedures, so long as these records are not required for audit or legal purposes. However, if the forms contain any analog components that are necessary to validate the information contained on them (e.g., a signature or notary's seal), they must be retained according to the disposition instructions for the records series encompassing the forms' function.

It is further agreed that these records may not be destroyed prior to the time periods stated; however, for sufficient reason they may be retained for longer periods. This schedule supersedes previous versions of this schedule and any localized amendments; it is to remain in effect from the date of approval until it is reviewed and updated.

APPROVAL RECOMMENDED

Kelly Clark Policelli Digitally signed by Kelly Clark Policelli Date: 2026.04.17 11:51:57 -04'00'

Name:

Title: Register of Deeds

Kelly Clark Policelli, Director

Division of Archives and Records

APPROVED

Pamela B. Cashwell Digitally signed by Pamela B. Cashwell Date: 2026.04.24 09:49:46 -04'00'

Name:

Title: Chair, Board of Commissioners

Pamela B. Cashwell, Secretary

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

County: _____

2026 County Register of Deeds Records Retention and Disposition Schedule

Effective Date: April 13, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

According to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-5(b) and N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-3, you may destroy public records only with the consent of the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR). The State Archives of North Carolina is the division of DNCR charged with administering a records management program. This schedule is the primary way the State Archives of North Carolina gives its consent. Without approving this schedule, your agency is obligated to obtain the State Archives of North Carolina's permission to destroy any record, no matter how insignificant.

Each records series listed on this schedule has specific disposition instructions that will indicate how long the series must be kept in your office. In some cases, the disposition instructions are simply "retain in office permanently," which means that those records must be kept in your office forever. In other cases, the retention period may be "destroy in office when reference value ends." An agency may have reference copies of materials, meaning "a copy of a record distributed to make recipients aware of the content but not directing the recipient to take any action on the matter".[2] Your agency must establish and enforce internal policies by setting minimum retention periods for the records that the State Archives of North Carolina has scheduled with the disposition instructions, "destroy when reference value ends."

Many of the records in the Register of Deeds Office are permanent records with a high degree of legal, administrative, and historical value. They are to be retained permanently and safeguarded from all damage. Any county that has preservation or conservation concerns records regarding these records should consult with the Government Records Section to inquire whether the State Archives wishes to take custody. Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.

E-mail is a record as defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-5 and N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132. It is the content of the e-mail that is critical when determining the retention period of a particular e-mail, including attachments, not the media in which the record was created. It is important for all agency employees and officials to determine the appropriate records series for specific e-mails and retain them according to the disposition instructions listed with the identified record series.

The State Archives of North Carolina recommends that all agency employees and officials view the tutorials that are available online through the State Archives website in order to familiarize themselves with records management principles and practices.

The State Archives of North Carolina creates preservation duplicates for minutes and selected other records of governing bodies and commissions, adoption records, and maps and plats and provides security storge for those preservation duplicates. Agencies can

[2] Society of American Archivists, *Dictionary of Archives Terminology*.

request copies of the digital images made during this process. Contact the appropriate Records Management Analyst to begin this process.

These records may also be reproduced by electronic or computer processes, but no digital copy may serve as the official preservation duplicate as defined by N.C. General Statute § 132-8.2. Per the General Statute, preservation duplicates shall be:

> "durable, accurate, complete and clear, and such duplicates made by a photographic, photostatic, microfilm, micro card, miniature photographic, or other process which accurately reproduces and forms a durable medium for so reproducing the original shall have the same force and effect for all purposes as the original record whether the original record is in existence or not."[3]

If you have records that are not listed in this schedule, contact a Records Management Analyst. An analyst will discuss the nature of the records with you to determine if the records have historical value. If the records do not have historical value, an analyst will provide a Request for Disposal of Unscheduled Records form for you to complete. If the records are an active records series, an analyst will work with you to add it to the next update of this schedule.

[3] North Carolina General Statute § 132-8.2: *Selection and preservation of records considered essential; making or designation of preservation duplicates; force and effect of duplicates or copies thereof.*

LEGEND FOR RECORDS SCHEDULE

This records retention and disposition schedule applies to records in all media, unless otherwise specified.

 – symbol designating that one or more records in this series may be confidential or may include confidential information.

Item # – an identifying number assigned to each records series for ease of reference.

Series – "a group of similar records that are . . . related as the result of being created, received, or used in the same activity." Series in this schedule are based on common functions in government offices.

Records Series Title – a short identification of the records in a series, based on their common function.

Series Description – a longer description of the records in a series, often including the types of records that can frequently be found in that series. This information is included underneath the Records Series Title.

Disposition Instructions – instructions dictating the length of time a series must be retained and how the office should dispose of those records after that time.

Certain disposition instructions may include one of the following symbols that indicate further instructions:

- ** Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.
- ± The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.

Citation – a listing of references to statutes, laws, and codes related to the records series. Citations can include:

- Authority: governing the creation of the record
- Confidentiality: limiting access to public records
- Retention: setting a retention period

Throughout this schedule, items that cross-reference other items within this schedule are indicated with a SEE ALSO reference. If you hover your cursor over one of these items, you will see the hand tool that will enable you to click on the item to follow the link to that location. Sample records series title and description with cross reference included:

AUDITS: PERFORMANCE

Records concerning internal and external audits conducted to assess the function of government programs. Includes reports, working papers, corrective measures, and other related records

SEE ALSO: Audits: Financial (STANDARD 2: BUDGET, FISCAL, AND PAYROLL RECORDS).

No destruction of records may take place if litigation or audits are pending or reasonably anticipated. See also AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS, Page A-6.

STANDARD 10: LAND AND PROPERTY RECORDS

Official records related to ownership, transfer, and leasing of land and property.

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.01	**DEEDS, RECORD OF AND INDEX** Official copies of deeds in order of registration.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 47-17.1 G.S. 47-17.2 G.S. 161-14 G.S. 161-21

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.02	**DEEDS OF TRUST (MORTGAGES), RECORD OF AND INDEX** Official copies of deeds of trust (mortgages) in order of registration, including foreclosures.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 45-6 G.S. 45-21.01 G.S. 45-36.6 G.S. 45-36.10 G.S. 45-36.17-24 G.S. 45-37.1-2 G.S. 45-42.1 G.S. 45-42.3 G.S. 45-82.1-3 G.S. 47-1 G.S. 47-17.1-2 G.S. 47-18 G.S. 47-20 G.S. 47-20.1-5 G.S. 161-14
10.03	**HIGHWAY RIGHT-OF-WAY MAPS AND INDEX** Plan and profile sheets of the final right-of-way plans for all department of transportation projects under which the right-of-way or other interest in real property is acquired or access is controlled.	a) Retain in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 136-19.4 Retention G.S. 136-19.4(b)

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.04	**LAND ENTRY BOOK** Record of entries of claims to vacant land. Includes name of person entering claim, description of land claimed, and date claim was filed.	a) Retain in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	
10.05	**LAND GRANT REGISTER** Records of grants from the Office of the Secretary of State obtained by any person.	a) Retain in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	
10.06	**MINERAL RIGHTS RECORDS AND INDEX** Records regarding the recording of subsurface rights, title or property in an area.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 1-42 G.S. 1-42.1-9 G.S. 161-22

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.07	**OFFICIAL RECORD BOOK AND INDEX** In some offices recorded records (instruments) are compiled in one "official record book," while other offices compile each type separately. These combined books may include deeds, deeds of trust, satisfactions, withdrawals, transfers, releases, contracts, condemnation, corporations, bankruptcies, farm names, farmland districts, timber marks, historic landmarks, waste disposals, renunciations, tax waivers, exemptions orders, etc. *Note: Some older Official Record Books may contain Armed Forces Discharges. These should no longer be filed in Official Record Books.*	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 161-14.01 G.S. 161-21 G.S. 161-22

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.08	**PETROLEUM LEASES REGISTER** Records indicating the leases which have been renewed for the ensuing year by every person, firm or corporation holding petroleum leases within the county.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 113-414
10.09	**PLATS, MAPS, AND INDEX**	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration may be transferred to the State Archives after 30 years.	Authority G.S. 47-30

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.10	**REGISTRATION OF TITLES (TORRENS ACT) AND INDEX** Register of certificates of title to real estate established by judgments of the Superior Court under the Torrens Act.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 43-13

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.11	**SURVEYS, RECORD OF AND INDEX**	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 47-30 G.S. 161-20
10.12	**TEMPORARY INDEX** Temporary index used by office until records are registered and entered into the permanent index	Destroy in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____ *Retention Note: Registered records are to be entered into a permanent index within 30 days after the date of presentation.*	Authority G.S. 161-14

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
10.13	**UNIFORM COMMERCIAL CODE** Security agreements on personal or real property that are recorded to protect the lender's, or secured party's, investment.	a) Retain all filings recorded with real property records permanently. b) Destroy in office after July 1, 2008 all filings which were effective on July 1, 2001. c) Destroy in office all filings not covered in a) and b) when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Retention G.S. 25-9-710
10.14	**WEBSITE (REGISTER OF DEEDS), REAL ESTATE CONVEYANCE**	Retain in office permanently.	

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

STANDARD 11: LICENSE, OATH, AND REGISTRATION RECORDS

Official records concerning registrations of assumed business names, corporations, and official oaths taken by notary publics.

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
11.01	**CORPORATIONS (INCORPORATIONS) RECORDS AND INDEX** Official copies of charters, certificates of dissolution, and other related documentation of corporations whose principal office is in the county.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 55D-26

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
11.02	**NOTARIES PUBLIC RECORDS AND INDEX** Includes name and signature of the notary, effective date and expiration date of commission, date oath was administered and date of any revocation or resignation. Also includes certificates and transmittals (oath sheets) received from the Notary Public Section, NC Department of Secretary of State.	a) Retain "Record of Notaries Public" in office permanently. b) Return a scanned copy of the oath to Notary Public Section and give the applicant the certificate. c) Destroy in office the original paper copy of the oath when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 10B-10
11.03	**PARTNERSHIPS AND ASSUMED NAMES RECORDS AND INDEX** Registration of assumed business names. Includes amendments to assumed business names and certificates of withdrawal of assumed business names.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration prior to 1996 may be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina. d) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected after registration date 1996 or later may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 66-71.4 G.S. 66.71-6-8 G.S. 66-71.10

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

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STANDARD 12: MARRIAGE AND VITAL STATISTIC RECORDS

Official records pertaining to major life events such as birth, marriage, death, and disinterment/reinterment.

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
12.01 	**APPLICATIONS FOR CERTIFIED COPIES** Application forms completed by persons seeking certified copies of birth, death or marriage certificates.	Destroy in office 2 years from date of request.	Authority G.S. 130A-93 Confidentiality G.S. 130A-93
12.02	**GRAVES REMOVAL RECORDS** Certificates, maps, attachments and similar records documenting the disinterment and reinterment of graves.	Retain in office permanently.	Authority G.S. 65-106 10A NCAC 41H .1201
12.03	**MARRIAGE LICENSES** Original endorsed marriage licenses returned to the Register of Deeds by the magistrate or minister. Includes delayed marriage certificates, amendments to marriage licenses, and supporting documentation.	a) Retain original licenses, affidavits, and court orders permanently.** b) Destroy in office after 5 years supporting proofs, applications, and related records. c) Forward "Application, License and Certificate of Marriage" forms to the Office of Vital Records. d) Records which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 51-2 G.S. 51-8 G.S. 51-18.1 G.S. 51-21 G.S. 130A-110

* *No destruction of records may take place if audits or litigation are pending or reasonably anticipated. See* ***AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS****, Page A-6.*

** *Bound records in this series that are more than 30 years old, or have severe conservation concerns, may be offered to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent transfer.*

± *The agency hereby agrees that it will establish and enforce internal policies setting minimum retention periods for the records that the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources has scheduled with the disposition instruction "destroy when reference value ends." Please use the space provided.*

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
12.04	**MARRIAGE REGISTER** Register of all marriages in the county. Includes, but is not limited to, the full name of the husband and wife, the date the ceremony was performed, and the location of the original license and return.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 51-18
12.05	**VITAL RECORDS: AMENDMENTS** Records submitted as evidence to amend, correct, or replace a birth or death certificate issued by the office of vital records.	a) Destroy in office 1 year after amendment and/or correction was approved, or request was denied or withdrawn. b) Return to Office of Vital Records copies of certificates involving adoptions, legitimations, or other registrants when a new certificate is received.	Authority G.S. 48-9-107 G.S. 130A-118 10A NCAC 41H Confidentiality G.S. 130A-93
12.06	**VITAL RECORDS: BIRTHS AND INDEX** Official copies of birth certificates deposited with the register of deeds by the local health department.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 130A-97 G.S. 130A-99 Confidentiality G.S. 130A-93

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
12.07	**VITAL RECORDS: DEATHS AND INDEX** Official copies of death certificates, including fetal death registrations, deposited with the register of deeds by the local health department. Original records are filed with the office of vital records.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 130A-99 G.S. 130A-112 G.S. 130A-114 G.S. 130A-115
12.08	**VITAL RECORDS: DELAYED BIRTHS AND INDEX** Official copies of certificates registering the birth of a person born in this state, but not registered within one year after birth. Original records are filed with the office of vital records.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 130A-104 Confidentiality G.S. 130A-93
12.09	**VITAL RECORDS: DELAYED BIRTH APPLICATION RECORDS** Applications and other records submitted as evidence in support of a delayed registration of birth. Copies are filed with the office of vital records.	a) Destroy in office after 1 year applications and supporting documentation for a non-completed registration. b) Destroy in office after 1 year applications and supporting documentation for a completed registration (certificate was approved).	Authority G.S. 130A-104 10A NCAC 41H .0400 Confidentiality G.S. 130A-93

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
12.10	**VITAL RECORDS: REPORT OF DEATHS OCCURRING OUTSIDE OF COUNTY** Reports of deaths occurring outside the county of birth received from the office of vital records.	Destroy in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	

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STANDARD 13: MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS

Other records produced or received by the office of the Register of Deeds.

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
13.01	**ARMED FORCES DISCHARGES AND INDEX.** Official copies of military discharges and indexes.	a) Retain official copies in office permanently. b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval. c) Original records returned to the office as undeliverable or else not collected may be destroyed in office when reference value ends. ± Agency Policy: Destroy in office after _____	Authority G.S. 47-109 G.S. 47-110 G.S. 47-113 Confidentiality G.S. 47-113.2
13.02	**ARMED FORCES DISCHARGES AUTHORIZATION FORMS** Forms used to give an authorized agent or representative the authority to record or request a copy of a discharge.	a) Retain forms authorizing an agent or representative to record an Armed Forces Discharge for 1 year from date discharge is filed. b) Retain forms authorizing an agent or representative to request a copy of an Armed Forces Discharge for 1 year from date of request.	Authority G.S. 47-113.2 Confidentiality G.S. 47-113.2 (j) Retention G.S. 47-113.2 (i)

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
13.03 	**ARMED FORCES DISCHARGES REQUEST FOR COPY FORMS** Forms completed by authorized persons requesting copies of discharge records.	Destroy in office 1 year from date received.	Authority G.S. 47-113.2 Confidentiality G.S. 47-113.2 (j) Retention G.S. 47-113.2 (i)
13.04	**CEMETERY LISTS** Lists of public cemeteries in the county outside of the limits of incorporated municipalities and not established and maintained for their use. Also includes lists of abandoned public cemeteries.	a) Retain in office permanently.** b) Records and indexes which have been transcribed or otherwise duplicated may be destroyed in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	Authority G.S. 65-111
13.05	**NOTICE OF ERROR** Forms, affidavits, and related records documenting errors made on records, not including amendments to vital records, in the Register of Deeds office.	Follow disposition instructions for original record, i.e. record to be corrected.	Authority G.S. 47-36.1 G.S. 47-36.2

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
13.06	**WEBSITE (REGISTER OF DEEDS), REQUEST TO REDACT PERSONAL INFORMATION** Forms and related records documenting a person's request to have personal information removed from the office's publicly available website.	Retain in office permanently.	Authority G.S. 132-1.10 (f)

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STANDARD 14: INACTIVE RECORDS

Historical record series housed in the Office of the Register of the Deeds or that were previously collected by the Office of the Register of the Deeds.

ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
14.01	**ARMED FORCES DISCHARGES REMOVAL REQUEST FORMS** Forms and related records documenting a veteran's request to have discharges papers removed from the office's recorded instruments.	Series discontinued. Retain in office permanently.	Authority Session Laws 2002-96 Authority Repealed Session Laws 2003-248
14.02	**BONDS: CLERK OF SUPERIOR COURT** Taken or renewed bonds belonging to the Office of the Clerk of Superior Court.	Destroy in office 6 years after termination.	Authority G.S. 58-72-50
14.03	**BRANDS AND MARKS** Brands or earmarks for differentiating livestock.	Series discontinued. Transfer to the State Archives of North Carolina.	

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
14.04	**CHATTEL MORTGAGES AND INDEX** Mortgages, agricultural liens, conditional sales contracts, and all other loans which use personal property as collateral. In 1967, Chattel Mortgages were succeeded by the Uniform Commercial Code.	Series discontinued. Chattel mortgages satisfied prior to 1967 may be destroyed at any time.	
14.05	**COHABITATION RECORDS** Records of cohabitation filed by freedmen. Includes names of cohabitants and the period of cohabitation.	Series discontinued. Transfer to State Archives of North Carolina.	
14.06	**DIVISIONS AND DOWERS RECORDS** Copies of reports of commissioners appointed to partition real estate and allot dowers, with certificate of approval of the Clerk of Superior Court.	Series discontinued. Transfer to the State Archives of North Carolina.	Authority G.S. 29-30 G.S. 46A-57
14.07	**FARM NAME REGISTER** Register of farm descriptions, names, registrants, and date of registration.	Series discontinued. Retain in office permanently.**	Authority G.S. 80-38 G.S. 80-39

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
14.08 	**JUROR LISTS AND RECORDS** Includes lists of each person qualified to be selected for jury duty within the county, a statement of the sources used and procedures followed in preparing the list, reports, and all other related documentation.	a) Series discontinued in Register of Deeds Office. Transfer records created prior to 1970 to the State Archives. b) Series discontinued in Register of Deeds Office. Transfer records created after 1970 to Clerk of Court.	Confidentiality G.S. 9-4 Retention G.S. 9-7
14.09	**LAND SOLD FOR TAXES AND INDEX** Records of land sold for county taxes. Includes name of delinquent taxpayer, years for which taxes were due, and description of property.	Series discontinued. Transfer to State Archives of North Carolina.	
14.10	**MARRIAGE HEALTH CERTIFICATES** Certificates from a regularly licensed physician stating that no evidence of venereal disease, tuberculosis in the infectious or communicable state, or mental incompetence was found in the applicants.	Series discontinued. Destroy in office immediately.	Authority G.S. 51-9 Authority Repealed Session Laws 1993-647
14.11	**MERCHANT RETURNS AND INDEX** Merchants' annual reports of total wholesale purchases made, used in determining franchise tax.	Series discontinued. Destroy in office 3 years after receipt.	

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
14.12	**MERIDIAN RECORDS AND INDEX** Records of the testing of surveyors' instruments. Includes date tested, direction and amount of declination from the county meridian line, and signature of the surveyor.	Series discontinued. Transfer to the State Archives of North Carolina.	
14.13	**MISCELLANEOUS RECORDS AND INDEX** Found in the physical custody of the Register of Deeds office. These records would typically fall under the care of another local government department within the county. Records may include tax, school, election and similar records found in the Register of Deeds office.	Destroy in office upon State Archives of North Carolina approval.	
14.14	**STRAYS, RECORD OF** Notices of discovery of lost livestock, with reports of commissioners appointed to determine reimbursement to the finder for care of the animal.	a) Series discontinued in Register of Deeds Office. Transfer records created prior to 1950 to the State Archives. b) Series discontinued in Register of Deeds Office. Transfer records created after 1950 to County Sheriff's Department.	Authority: G.S. 68-18.1 Session Law 2012-18

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ITEM #	RECORDS SERIES TITLE	DISPOSITION INSTRUCTIONS	CITATION
14.15	**TIMBER MARKS AND INDEX** Copies of letters, figures, or words identifying timber trademarks of any person or business within the county.	Series discontinued. Transfer to the State Archives of North Carolina.	

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MANAGING PUBLIC RECORDS IN NORTH CAROLINA

Q. What is this "records retention and disposition schedule"?

A. This document is a tool for the employees of local government agencies across North Carolina to use when managing the records in their offices. It lists records commonly found in agency offices and gives an assessment of their value by indicating how long those records should be retained. This schedule is also an agreement between your agency and the State Archives of North Carolina.

This schedule serves as the inventory and schedule that the State Archives of North Carolina is directed by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-5(c) and N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-8 to provide. It supersedes all previous editions, including all amendments.

Q. How do I get this schedule approved?

A. This schedule must be approved by your governing body for use in your agency. That approval should be made in a regular meeting and recorded as an action in the minutes. It may be done as part of the consent agenda, by resolution, or other action.

Q. Am I required to have all the records listed on this schedule?

A. No, this is not a list of records you must have in your office.

Q. What is "reference value"?

A. Items containing "reference value" in the disposition instructions are generally records that hold limited value, which is typically restricted to those documenting routine operations within the office. A minimum retention period should be established by the office for any items containing the phrase "destroy in office when reference value ends" in the disposition instructions.

Q. Do the standards correspond to the organizational structure of my agency?

A. Records series are grouped into standards to make it easier for users to locate records and their disposition instructions. You may find that the groupings reflect the organizational structure of your agency, or you may find that records are located in various standards depending on the content of the record. The intent of the schedule's organization is to provide an easy reference guide for the records created in your agency.

Q. *What if I cannot find some of my records on this schedule?*

A. Sometimes the records are listed in a different standard than how you organize them in your office. Be sure to browse the schedule by standard and utilize the search function on the PDF version of the schedule to facilitate the location of records series. If you still cannot locate your records on the schedule, contact a Records Management Analyst. We will work with you to add it to the next update of this schedule so that you may destroy records appropriately.

Q. *What are public records?*

A. The *General Statutes of North Carolina*, Chapter 132, provides this definition of public records:

> "Public record" or "public records" shall mean all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, photographs, films, sound recordings, magnetic or other tapes, electronic data-processing records, artifacts, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance in connection with the transaction of public business by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions. Agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions shall mean and include every public office, public officer or official (State or local, elected or appointed), institution, board, commission, bureau, council, department, authority or other unit of government of the State or of any county, unit, special district or other political subdivision of government.

Q. *Is any person allowed to see my records?*

A. Yes, except as restricted by specific provisions in state or federal law. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-6 instructs:

> Every custodian of public records shall permit any record in the custodian's custody to be inspected and examined at reasonable times and under reasonable supervision by any person, and shall, as promptly as possible, furnish copies thereof upon payment of any fees as may be prescribed by law. … No person requesting to inspect and examine public records, or to obtain copies thereof, shall be required to disclose the purpose or motive for the request.

Q. *What about my confidential records?*

A. Not all government records are open to public inspection. Exceptions to the access requirements in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-6 and the definition of public records in N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-1 are found throughout the General Statutes. You must be able to cite a specific provision in the General Statutes or federal law when you restrict or deny access to a particular record.

Q. *Am I required to make available to the public copies of drafts that have not been approved?*

A. Yes, even if a report, permit, or other record has not been finalized, it is still a public record subject to request. Any record that is not confidential by law must be provided when a request is received, whether it is "finished" or not.

Q. What do I do with permanent records?

A. Permanent records should be maintained in the office that created the records, forever.

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) is charged by the General Assembly with the administration of a records management program (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-4 (2) and § 132-8.1) and the maintenance of "a program for the selection and preservation of public records considered essential to the operation of government and to the protection of the rights and interests of persons" (§ 132-8.2). Permanent records with these characteristics require preservation duplicates that are human-readable (paper or microfilm). Some examples of these characteristics include but are not limited to:

- Affect multiple people, without regard to relation
- Have significance over a long span of time
- Document governance
- Document citizenship

Examples of records with these characteristics:

- Minutes of governing bodies at the state and local levels are the basic evidence of our system of governance, and are routinely provided for the public to read.
- Records, such as deeds and tax scrolls, about land document changes in ownership and condition. Counties maintain offices expressly for the purpose of making those records available to the public. Other records in local and state governments document potential public health hazards, such as hazardous materials spills.
- Adoptions, marriages, and divorces document changes in familial relationships and document citizenship. Though adoptions are confidential (not available for public inspection), they document citizenship and changes in inheritance and familial succession.
- Court records, such as wills, estates, and capital cases, affect people within and across family groups, are made available for public inspection, and often involve transactions related to the examples above.

See the Human-Readable Preservation Duplicates guidance issued by the North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and check with a records analyst to determine whether your permanent records require a preservation duplicate.

Q. What is historical value?

A. Historical records document significant events, actions, decisions, conditions, relationships, and similar developments. These records have administrative, legal, fiscal, or evidential importance for the government or its citizens. Two criteria for determining historical value are inherent interest and extraordinary documentation:

- Inherent interest is created by non-routine events, by the involvement of famous parties, and by compelling contexts. For instance, foreclosure proceedings from the 1930s have high historical value because they date from the era of the Great Depression.

- Extraordinary documentation is found in records that shed light on political, public, or social history. For instance, the records from the replevin case that returned the Bill of Rights to North Carolina hold more historical value than most property case files because of the political history intertwined with this case.

SANC has further elaborated selection criteria that help distinguish records with historical value:

- Do they protect the rights and property of citizens?
- Do they have a long-term impact on citizens?
- Do they document the core functions of an agency?
- Do they document high-level decision-making that shapes an agency's policies or initiatives?
- Do they summarize an agency's activities?

Contact a Records Management Analyst for further assistance in assessing historical value.

Q. What if I do not have any records?

A. Nearly every position in government generates, receives, or uses records. Computer files of any kind, including drafts and e-mail, are public records. Even if your records are not the official or final version, your records are public records. Not all records have high historical, legal, or fiscal value, but they all must be destroyed in accordance with the provisions of the appropriate records schedule.

Q. I have a lot of unsorted records. What's a good first step for getting a handle on these records?

A. We encourage you to create a file plan of what records you have. When you create this plan, you can match each record to its placement on this schedule or on the appropriate retention schedule. A sample file plan is available on our Records Management Tools webpage. Having a file plan can help you strategize how to best organize your physical or digital records. A file plan is also useful in disaster planning and scheduling destructions.

Q. May I store our unused records in the basement, attic, shed, etc.?

A. Public records are public property. Though we encourage agencies to find places to store records that do not take up too much valuable office space, the selected space should be dry, secure, and free from pests and mold. Your office must ensure that records stored away from your main office area are well protected from natural and man-made problems while remaining readily available to your staff and the public.

Q. Our old records are stored in the attic, basement, off-site building, etc. Are we required to provide public access to these records?

A. Yes, as long as the records are not confidential by law. You should also be aware that confidentiality can expire.

Q. *Aren't all our old records at the State Archives of North Carolina?*

A. Probably not. The State Archives of North Carolina collects only very specific types of records from local government offices. Contact a Records Management Analyst for more information about which records are held or can be transferred to the State Archives of North Carolina for permanent preservation.

Q. *I found some really old records. What should I do with them?*

A. Contact a Records Management Analyst. We will help you examine the records and assess their historical value.

Q. *Can I give my old records to the historical society or public library?*

A. Before you offer any record to a historical society, public library, or any other entity, you must contact a Records Management Analyst. Permanent records must be kept either in your offices or at the State Archives of North Carolina.

Q. *Whom can I contact with questions?*

A. You may contact a Records Management Analyst directly or email recordsmanagement@dncr.nc.gov.

Q. *What types of workshops or training do you offer?*

A. Records Management Analysts conduct in-person and virtual workshops for local government agencies. There is no fee for these workshops, and a certificate of attendance can be provided upon request. If you would like to schedule a customized workshop for your agency, contact an analyst or email recordsmanagement@dncr.nc.gov.

AUDITS, LITIGATION, AND OTHER OFFICIAL ACTIONS

Q. Why is there an asterisk in the disposition instructions of so many items on this schedule?

A. No record involved in a pending or ongoing audit, legal, or other official action may be destroyed before that audit or action is resolved.

A legal hold or litigation hold means that records that are the subject of the legal hold or litigation hold must be preserved and thus must not be destroyed until officially released from the hold. A legal hold or litigation hold is placed when either an official discovery order is served on the agency requesting the production of the records in question (for a litigation, regulatory investigation, audit, open records request, etc.) or litigation is pending and the agency is thus on notice to preserve all potentially relevant records. You must also ensure that for a claim or litigation that appears to be reasonably foreseeable or anticipated but not yet initiated, any records (in paper or electronic formats) relevant to such a claim or litigation are preserved and not destroyed until released by your General Counsel. The records in question must not be destroyed until the completion of the action and the resolution of all issues that arise from it regardless of the retention period set forth in this schedule.

We have used an asterisk (*) in the disposition instructions to mark records series that are commonly audited, litigated, or may be subject to other official actions. However, any record has this potential. Records custodians are responsible for being aware of potential actions, and for preventing the destruction of any record that is, or may be reasonably expected to become, involved in an audit, legal, or other official action.

Records used during routine audits may be destroyed when the governing body accepts the audit, if the records have completed the retention period listed in this schedule. If time remains in the retention period, the records must be maintained for the remainder of the period. The auditor's working papers must be kept according to the schedule. (See General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies, Audits: Performance (STANDARD 1: ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT RECORDS) and Audits: Financial (STANDARD 2: BUDGET, FISCAL, AND PAYROLL RECORDS).) Should a dispute arise over an audit, the records that were audited should be retained until that dispute is resolved.

The attorney representing the agency should inform records custodians when legal matters are concluded and records will no longer be needed. Following the conclusion of any legal action, the records may be destroyed if they have met the retention period in the schedule. Otherwise, they should be kept for the remaining time period.

TRANSITORY RECORDS

According to North Carolina General Statutes § 121 and § 132, every document, paper, letter, map, book, photograph, film, sound recording, magnetic or other tape, electronic data processing record, artifact, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received in connection with the transaction of public business by any state, county, municipal agency, or other political subdivision of government is considered a public record and may not be disposed of, erased, or destroyed without specific approval from the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

The Department of Natural and Cultural Resources recognizes that some records may have little or no long-term documentary or evidential value to the creating agency. These records are often called "transitory records." The following questions and answers discuss types of transitory records commonly created in state government. They may be disposed of according to the guidance below. However, all public employees should be familiar with the General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies, their office's Program Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, and any other applicable guidelines for their office. If any of these documents require a different retention period for these records, follow the longer of the two retention periods. When in doubt about whether a record is transitory, or whether it has special significance or importance, retain the record in question and seek guidance from a Records Management Analyst.

Q. What do I do with routing slips, fax over sheets, "while you were out" slips, memory aids, etc.?

A. Routing slips and transmittal sheets adding no information to that contained in the transmitted material have minimal value after the material has been successfully transmitted. These records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of after receipt of the material has been confirmed.

Similarly, "while you were out" slips, memory aids, and other records requesting follow-up actions (including voicemails) have minimal value once the official action these records are supporting has been completed and documented. Unless they are listed on the General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies or your office's Program Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, these records may be destroyed or otherwise disposed of once the action has been resolved.

Q. What about research materials, drafts, and other working papers used to create a final, official record?

A. Drafts and working papers are materials, including notes and calculations, gathered or created to assist in the creation of another record. All drafts and working papers are public records subject to all provisions of General Statute § 132, but many of them have minimal value after the final version of the record has been approved, and may be destroyed after final approval, if they are no longer necessary to support the analysis or conclusions of the official record. Drafts and working documents which may be destroyed after final approval include:

- Drafts and working papers for internal and external policies
- Drafts and working papers for internal administrative reports, such as daily and monthly activity reports

- Drafts and working papers for internal, non-policy-level documents, such as informal workflows and manuals; and
- Drafts and working papers for presentations, workshops, and other explanations of agency policy that are already formally documented

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Q. What if I have forms designed and used solely to create, update, or modify records in an electronic medium?

A. If these records are not required for audit or legal purposes, they may be destroyed in office after completion of data entry and after all verification and quality control procedures. However, if the forms contain any analog components that are necessary to validate the information contained on them (e.g., a signature or notary's seal), they should be retained according to the disposition instructions for the records series encompassing the forms' function.

See also the State Archives of North Carolina's guidance on digital signatures.

DESTRUCTION OF PUBLIC RECORDS

Q. When can I destroy records?

A. After your agency has approved this records retention and disposition schedule, records that have met retention should be destroyed in one of the following ways per the N.C. Administrative Code, Title 7, Chapter 4, Subchapter M, Section .0510:

1. burned, unless prohibited by local ordinance;
2. shredded or torn so as to destroy the record content of the documents or material concerned;
3. placed in acid vats so as to reduce the paper to pulp and to terminate the existence of the documents or materials concerned;
4. sold as waste paper, provided that the purchaser agrees in writing that the documents or materials concerned will not be resold without pulverizing or shredding the documents so that the information contained within cannot be practicably read or reconstructed.

The provision that electronic records are to be destroyed means that the data, metadata, and physical media are to be overwritten, deleted, and unlinked so that the data and metadata may not be practicably reconstructed.

The data, metadata, and physical media containing confidential records of any format are to be destroyed in such a manner that the information cannot be read or reconstructed under any means.

Without your agency's approval of this records schedule, no records may legally be destroyed.

Q. How can I destroy records if they are not listed on this schedule?

A. Contact a Records Management Analyst. An analyst will discuss the nature of the records with you to determine if the records have historical value. If the records do have historical value, we will discuss the possibility of transferring the records to the State Archives of North Carolina to be preserved permanently.

If the records do not have historical value, an analyst will provide a Request for Disposal of Unscheduled Records form for you to complete. If the records are an active records series, an analyst will work with you to add it to the next update of this schedule.

Q. Am I required to tell anyone about the destructions?

A. We recommend that you report on your records retention activities to your governing board on an annual basis. This report does not need to be detailed, but it is important that significant destructions be entered into the minutes of the Board. We have a sample destructions log available on our Records Management Tools webpage.

ELECTRONIC RECORDS: E-MAIL, BORN-DIGITAL RECORDS, AND DIGITAL IMAGING

Q. When can I delete my e-mail?

A. E-mail is a public record as defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 121-5 and § 132. Electronic mail is as much a record as any paper record and must be treated in the same manner. It is the content of each message that is important. If a particular message would have been filed as a paper memo, it should still be filed (either in your e-mail program or in your regular directory structure), and it should be retained the same length of time as its paper counterparts. It is inappropriate to destroy e-mail simply because storage limits have been reached. Some examples of e-mail messages that are public records and therefore covered by this policy include:

- Policies or directives;
- Final drafts of reports and recommendations;
- Correspondence and memoranda related to official business;
- Work schedules and assignments;
- Meeting agendas or minutes
- Any document or message that initiates, facilitates, authorizes, or completes a business transaction; and
- Messages that create a precedent, such as issuing instructions and advice.

See the State Archives' webpage on managing e-mail as a public record for more guidance.

Q. May I print my e-mail to file it?

A. We do not recommend printing e-mail for preservation purposes. Important metadata is lost when e-mail is printed. See Metadata as a Public Record for more information.

Q. I use my personal e-mail account for work. No one can see my personal e-mail, right?

A. The best practice is to avoid using personal resources, including private e-mail accounts, for public business. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-1 states that records "made or received pursuant to law or ordinance *in connection with the transaction of public business* by any agency of North Carolina government or its subdivisions" are public records (emphasis added). The fact that public records reside in a personal e-mail account is irrelevant. If you use a personal e-mail for public business, that email is still liable to public records requests and litigation.

Q. We have an imaging system. Are we required to keep the paper?

A. You may scan any record, but you will need to receive approval from the Government Records Section in order to destroy paper originals that have been digitized. Your agency must develop an electronic records policy and then submit a Request for Disposal of Paper Records Duplicated by Electronic Means. You can find these templates on the Electronic Records in

Local Government Agencies page of the State Archives of North Carolina website. Contact a Records Management Analyst for further instructions on how to develop a compliant electronic records policy.

Permanent records must have a security preservation copy as defined by State Archives of North Carolina's **Human-Readable Preservation Duplicate Policy** (N.C. Gen. Stat. § 132-8.2):

> Preservation duplicates shall be durable, accurate, complete and clear, and such duplicates made by a photographic, photo static, microfilm, micro card, miniature photographic, or other process which accurately reproduces and forms a durable medium for so reproducing the original shall have the same force and effect for all purposes as the original record whether the original record is in existence or not. ... Such preservation duplicates shall be preserved in the place and manner of safekeeping prescribed by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources.

The preservation duplicate of permanent records must be either on paper or microfilm.

Non-permanent records may be retained in any format. You will need to take precautions with electronic records that you must keep more than about 5 years. Computer systems do not have long life cycles. Each time you change computer systems, you must convert all records to the new system so that you can assure their preservation and provide access.

Q. Computer storage is cheap. Can I just keep my computer records permanently?

A. The best practice is to destroy all records that have met their retention requirements, regardless of format.

Q. What are the guidelines regarding the creation and handling of electronic public records, including text messages and social media?

A. There are numerous documents available on the State Archives of North Carolina Digital Records webpage. Topics covered include shared storage, cloud computing, e-discovery, trustworthy digital public records, digital signatures, e-mail, social media, text messages, websites, digital imaging, metadata, file formats, database indexing, and security backups.

Note that e-mail, text messages, and social media should be handled according to their content. Therefore, this schedule does not include a records series that instructs you on how to handle one of these born-digital records by format; instead of focusing on how the information is disseminated, consider what content is contained in the e-mail, text message, or social media post. For instance, an e-mail requesting leave that is sent to a supervisor should be kept for 3 years. (On the General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies, see Leave Records (STANDARD 4: HUMAN RESOURCES RECORDS).

SECURITY PRESERVATION COPIES OF RECORDS

Q. What is the advantage to having security preservation copies of records stored with the State Archives?

A. Having duplicate copies of essential records in a separate location mitigates the risk that you may lose the only physical copy of a given record in a disaster or other records loss event. Maintaining offsite duplicates of records, regardless of format, is a good practice to adopt.

The State Archives creates duplicate copies on microfilm because of the durability of the medium. Silver negative microfilm does not decay for hundreds of years, ensuring that your records maintain their integrity over time.

Q. What records will the State Archives back up for us?

A. The State Archives provides security imaging services for minutes of major decision-making boards and commissions. We will also image records of adoptions for Social Services agencies as well as maps and plats from Registers of Deeds offices. Once those records are imaged, they are converted to security microfilm. We will store the silver negative (original) microfilm in our security vault. Contact the Records Management Analyst in charge of imaging coordination for the most current information.

Q. How do I start the process of backing up the above listed records?

A. For more information and instructions for sending records for filming, see the Microfilming Records for Local Government webpage.

Q. In the event of a records loss, how do I obtain copies of the security preservation copies stored at the State Archives?

A. Contact the Records Management Analyst in charge of imaging coordination who will help you purchase copies of the microfilm from our office. You can then send those reels to a vendor who can either make new printed books or scan the film to create a digital copy.

Q. Can I obtain digital copies of the security preservation records?

A. Yes, you can request digital copies of records when you submit them to the State Archives for initial reproduction. Contact the Records Management Analyst in charge of imaging coordination to initiate a request for digital duplicates.

DISASTER ASSISTANCE

Q. What should I do in case of a fire or flood?

A. Secure the area and keep everyone out until fire or other safety professionals allow entry. Then, call our Essential Records Analyst at (252) 639-3543.

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO MOVE OR CLEAN ANY RECORDS.

Damaged records are extremely fragile and require careful handling. Our staff are trained in preliminary recovery techniques, documenting damage to your records, and authorizing destruction of damaged records. Professional vendors can handle larger disasters.

Do not dispose of any records that have not met retention, no matter how damaged, without talking to the Essential Records Analyst first.

Q. What help do you give in case of an emergency?

A. We will do everything we can to visit you at the earliest opportunity in order to provide hands-on assistance. We can assist you in appraising the records that have been damaged so that precious resources (and especially time) are not spent on records with lesser value. We can provide lists of professional recovery vendors that you can contact to preserve your essential and permanent records.

Q. What can I do to prepare for an emergency?

A. We provide training on disaster preparation that includes a discussion of the roles of proper inventories, staff training, and advance contracts with recovery vendors. If you would like to have this workshop presented, contact the Essential Records Analyst.

Q. What are essential records?

A. Essential records are records that are necessary for continuity of operations in the event of a disaster. Essential records typically fall into one of five categories:

- Records that are necessary for emergency response, such as Emergency Plans, Continuity of Operations Plans, Emergency Contact Information, Maps and Building Plans, and Infrastructure and Utility Plans
- Records that are necessary to resume or continue operations, such as Delegations of Authority, Contracts and Leases, Payroll, Insurance Records, and Prison, Jail, and Parole Records
- Records that protect the health, safety, property, and rights of residents, such as Deeds and Land Records, Birth and Marriage Records, Active Court Proceedings, Education Records, Voting Records, and Professional Licenses

- Records that would require massive resources to reconstruct, such as Tax Records and Geographic Information Systems Data
- Records that document the history of families and communities, such as Historical Documents, Governing Body Minutes, Photographs, and Identity Records

Essential records should be stored in safe, secure locations as well as duplicated and stored off-site, if possible.

GEOSPATIAL RECORDS

Q. Why should geographic information system (GIS) datasets be retained and preserved?

A. Geospatial records are public records and need to be retained and preserved based on their legal, fiscal, evidential and/or historical value according to an established retention schedule. Local agencies involved in GIS operations should work with the State Archives of North Carolina in order to appraise, inventory, and preserve their geospatial records according to established best practices and standards to insure both their short- and long-term accessibility.

Due to the complexity and transitory nature of these records, geospatial records retention and long-term preservation is a community-wide challenge. GIS files have become essential to the function of many local agencies and will continue to frequently be utilized in agency decision-making processes in the near and far future. Accessibility of GIS records over time has legal, fiscal, practical, and historical implications. The availability of GIS records can help safeguard the local government's legal and fiscal accountability and aid agencies in conducting retrospective and prospective studies. These studies are only possible when essential data from the past are still available.

Q. What GIS datasets should be preserved by local governments?

A. The following types of geospatial records have been designated as having archival value:

- Parcel data
- Street centerline data
- Corporate limits data
- Extraterritorial jurisdiction data
- Zoning data, address points
- Orthophotography (imagery)
- Utilities
- Emergency/E-911 themes

For more information, see General Records Schedule: Local Government Agencies, STANDARD 3: GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS) RECORDS).

Q. How often should we capture the datasets retained for their legal, fiscal, evidential, or historical value?

A. Consult the retention schedule for frequency of capture. The frequency of capture is based on the significance of the record as well as its alterability.

Q. What data formats, compression formats, and media should be used to preserve the data?

A. Archiving practices should be consistent with North Carolina Geographic Information Coordinating Council (GICC) approved standards and recommendations. (Examples: Content Standards for Metadata; Data Sharing Recommendations). Consult the GICC website.

Q. Who should be responsible for creation and long-term storage of archived data?

A. The creating agency, NCOneMap, and the State Archives of North Carolina may all have responsibility for archiving data. If you choose to upload your data to NCOneMap, consult with your county's GIS department to determine whether data will be uploaded by your agency or by the whole county. If you choose not to upload your data to NCOneMap, your agency must comply with standards (for metadata, file naming, data sharing, and long term preservation) and procedures adopted by the North Carolina Geographic Information Coordinating Council.