

What is the purpose of this guidance?

This tip sheet helps staff identify any agency record that needs to be kept and ones that need to be deleted.

Why is this important?

All public records, regardless of media, are subject to strict retention and disclosure requirements. Records exist in multiple places, variable media, and multiple copies.

Even though all of this is a public record, you may not need to keep it long term. It should be discarded according to the correct retention schedules. First, you determine if you need to keep something, then consult the retention schedule to identify the time period for that record series.

What is not covered by this guidance?

This sheet does not provide individual retention schedule guidance. To find retention schedules, go to: [Records & Information Management's webpage \(Internal Link\)](#).

This also does not discuss which agency records are subject to public disclosure. As with any other request for public records, the records must be provided and reviewed on a case-by-case basis to determine if the records or any of the content is exempt from disclosure.

Still have questions?

Contact [Records and Information Management \(RIM\) \(Internal Link\)](#).

What is an agency record?

An agency record is a public record, defined as anything made or received by an agency in the state of Washington and connected with the transaction of public business – regardless of physical form or characteristics. This means agency records can exist in any media: paper, electronic, databases, applications, email, recordings, scans, photographs, physical samples taken, and more.

Which agency records need to be kept?

Agency records must be kept if they document the conduct of government – WSDOT's work. Think about its context and function. How long they are kept is determined by the retention schedule (see [Tip 1-5](#)).

Examples of agency records that need to be kept

- Anything related to or documenting:
 - Department business
 - The decision-making process
 - Program's business process
 - Policy, policy development, or policy implementation
 - Instructions, guidance, or procedures
- Signed documents, official "submittals" like applications, reports, etc.
- Significant drafts (see [Tip 1-7](#))
- Anything that documents a permit, project, program, transaction, internal process requirement, or specific legal requirement.
- Records received from outside WSDOT that are directly related to business.

Examples of agency records that don't need to be kept

- Anything covered by [Tip 1-6](#) including:
 - Information-only copies or documents distributed for reference or convenience, such as announcements or bulletins.
 - Miscellaneous notes with no legal or fiscal value
 - Copies of published materials.
 - Preliminary drafts (see [Tip 1-7](#))
 - Routing slips and transmittal memos (unless it is a transmittal email for its attachments)
 - “FYI” things: copies of inter- or intra-agency memoranda, bulletins, or directives of a general information and non-continuing nature
- Email messages that are not business related or are “junk” messages.
- Transitory records (records with temporary/short-term or no value).