

What is the purpose of this guidance?

This document provides guidance for managing draft documents. It lists situations in general to help staff determine when a draft must be kept and when it can and should be destroyed or deleted.

Why is this important?

Documents in draft form are used to conduct WSDOT business, and they are considered public records. Because there may be many versions of a document, and drafts exist in paper and electronic form, it can be difficult to distinguish what to keep and for how long. The result is over storing electronic data and the agency doesn't want that.

What is not covered by this guidance?

This does not address how long to retain each draft. But, once you determine a draft needs to be kept, then consult the retention schedule to identify the time period for that type of document.

This does not discuss which drafts are subject to public disclosure. As with any other request for public records, the draft must be 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 are the different types of drafts and how long do they need to be kept?

Preliminary Drafts

Preliminary drafts are versions that have temporary administrative value.

- Sometimes referred to as “transitory.”
- The most common type of draft.
- These drafts in paper and electronic form can and should be destroyed or deleted when they have served their purpose. See [State General Schedule 50](#) “Administrative Materials with No Retention Value.”

Examples of preliminary drafts are:

- “Proofreading” versions used to correct spelling or grammar.
- “Word-smithing” versions that contain minor changes without changing the intent or policy.
- Versions used for routine internal agency consultation.

Significant Drafts

The term “significant drafts” means they are “significant” to the business process documenting the performance of requirements.

- The least common type of draft and in some business processes may never be created.
- Since they are significant to the business process, the retention period is the same as the final document.
- Sometimes you can just keep the paper version of a document. Other times an electronic version must also be kept - like those that track comments or collaboration by multiple people.

Examples of significant drafts are:

- Drafts that document decisions, negotiations or change WSDOT policy decisions.
- Drafts reviewed or edited by WSDOT legal staff (from the Office of the Attorney General) that are not used for routine internal agency consultation.
- Drafts used for consultation outside WSDOT, and published or released for public comment.
- Drafts named within an official retention schedule.

When trying to determine if a draft needs to be kept, think about its context and function - what purpose did it serve?