

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

April 13, 2026

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.

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*.

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

Danett H. Foster

Name:

Title: Register of Deeds

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

Kelly Clark Policelli, Director

Division of Archives and Records

APPROVED

Pamela B. Cashwell

Name:

Title: Chair, Board of Commissioners

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

Pamela B. Cashwell, Secretary

Department of Natural and Cultural Resources

County: Ashe

2026 County Register of Deeds Records Retention and Disposition Schedule

Effective Date: April 13, 2026

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.*

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.

2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 10: Land and Property Records

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.

2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 10: Land and Property Records

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 _____	<u>Authority</u> G.S. 1-42 G.S. 1-42.1-9 G.S. 161-22

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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 10: Land and Property Records

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

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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 10: Land and Property Records

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 _____ <i>Retention Note: Registered records are to be entered into a permanent index within 30 days after the date of presentation.</i>	Authority G.S. 161-14

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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

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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

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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 12: Marriage and Vital Statistic Records

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.	<u>Authority</u> 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.	<u>Authority</u> G.S. 130A-104 <u>Confidentiality</u> 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).	<u>Authority</u> G.S. 130A-104 10A NCAC 41H .0400 <u>Confidentiality</u> G.S. 130A-93

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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 13: Miscellaneous Records

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 _____	<u>Authority</u> G.S. 47-109 G.S. 47-110 G.S. 47-113 <u>Confidentiality</u> 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.	<u>Authority</u> G.S. 47-113.2 <u>Confidentiality</u> G.S. 47-113.2 (j) <u>Retention</u> G.S. 47-113.2 (i)

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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 13: Miscellaneous Records

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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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 14: Inactive Records

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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2026 Register of Deeds Program Records Schedule, Standard 14: Inactive Records

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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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 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.

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@dn-cr.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@dn-cr.nc.gov.

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

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](#).

[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).

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

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.