

GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULE 20

Electronic Records

This schedule provides disposal authorization for certain electronic records and for specified paper, microform, or other hard copy records that are integrally related to the electronic records.

This schedule applies to electronic records created or received by Federal agencies including those managed for agencies by contractors. It covers records created by computer operators, programmers, analysts, systems administrators, and all personnel with access to a computer. Disposition authority is provided for certain master files, including some tables that are components of data base management systems, and certain files created from master files for specific purposes. In addition, this schedule covers certain electronic records produced by end users in office automation applications. These disposition authorities apply to the categories of electronic records described in GRS 20, regardless of the type of computer used to create or store these records.

GRS 20 does not cover all electronic records. Disposition may not be carried out for electronic records not covered by GRS 20 unless authorized by a Standard Form (SF) 115, Request for Records Disposition Authority, that has been approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The records covered by several items in this schedule are authorized for erasure or deletion when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes. NARA cannot establish a more specific retention that would be appropriate in all applications. Each agency should, when appropriate, determine a more specific disposition instruction, such as "Delete after X update cycles" or "Delete when X years old," for inclusion in its records disposition directives or manual. NARA approval is not needed to set retention periods for records in the GRS that are authorized for destruction when no longer needed.

Items 1a (in part), 2a, and 16 of this schedule apply to hard copy records used in conjunction with electronic files. Item 1 also covers printouts produced to test, use, and maintain master files. Items 10 and 11 of this schedule should be applied to special purpose programs and documentation for the referenced electronic records whatever the medium in which such programs and documentation exist.

This schedule has been revised to expand the authority agencies have to apply previously approved schedules to electronic records; grant broader authority to agencies to dispose of hard copy records that have been converted to an electronic format; and provide disposition instructions for ad hoc printouts and for documentation associated with permanent electronic records. Additionally, because copies of system security records are now covered by GRS 24, item 5, a cross-reference has been provided for item 11b to that effect. The items affected by the revisions to this GRS 20 schedule are 2, 3, 3.1, 11, and 16.

Electronic versions of most records authorized for disposal elsewhere in the GRS may be deleted under the provisions of item 3 of GRS 20. See also 36 CFR Part 1234 for NARA regulations on electronic records management.

1. Files/Records Relating to the Creation, Use, and Maintenance of Computer Systems, Applications, or Electronic Records.

- a. Electronic files or records created solely to test system performance, as well as hard copy printouts and related documentation for the electronic files/records.

Delete/destroy when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

- b. Electronic files or records used to create or update a master file, including, but not limited to, work files, valid transaction files, and intermediate input/output records.

Delete after information has been transferred to the master file and verified.

- c. Electronic files and hard copy printouts created to monitor system usage, including, but not limited to, log-in files, password files, audit trail files, system usage files, and cost-back files used to assess charges for system use.

Delete/destroy when the agency determines they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

2. Input/Source Records.

- a. Hard copy (non-electronic) documents used to create, update, or modify electronic records when the electronic records are retained to meet recordkeeping requirements and are covered by a NARA-approved schedule. Included are such records as hard copy forms used for data input as well as hard copy documents that are scanned into an electronic recordkeeping system (e.g., correspondence, reports, still pictures, maps, etc.).

- (1) Hard copy documents that NARA has specifically designated as permanent records that must be transferred to NARA in hard copy format, even if records have been copied/converted to an electronic format.

Permanent. Transfer to NARA in accordance with previously approved schedule.

- (2) Hard copy records previously approved as permanent that are converted to electronic records where the electronic records do not meet NARA's transfer standards for permanent electronic records in effect at the time of conversion.

Permanent. Transfer to NARA in accordance with previously approved schedule.

- (3) Hard copy documents that contain information that is not or cannot be captured in the electronic version of the records (e.g., certain handwritten annotations).

Apply previously approved schedule.

- (4) Hard copy documents other than those covered by Items 2(a) (1) – (3).

Destroy after the information has been converted to an electronic medium and verified, when no longer needed for legal or audit purposes or to support the reconstruction of, or serve as a backup to, the electronic records, or 60 days after NARA has been provided the notification required by 36 CFR 1228.31(b)(1)(i), whichever is later.

[NOTE: The term hard copy records or non-electronic records as used in this schedule includes, in addition to traditional textual files: still picture negatives, prints, slides, and transparencies; aerial photography, maps, charts, and drawings; motion picture film and analog videotape; and analog sound recordings.]

- b. Electronic records, except as noted in item 2c, entered into the system during an update process, and not required for audit and legal purposes.

Delete when data have been entered into the master file or database and verified, or when no longer required to support reconstruction of, or serve as backup to, a master file or database, whichever is later.

- c. Electronic records received from another agency and used as input/ source records by the receiving agency, EXCLUDING records produced by another agency under the terms of an interagency agreement, or records created by another agency in response to the specific information needs of the receiving agency.

Delete when data have been entered into the master file or database and verified, or when no longer needed to support reconstruction of, or serve as backup to, the master file or database, whichever is later.

- d. Computer files or records containing uncalibrated and unvalidated digital or analog data collected during observation or measurement activities or research and development programs and used as input for a digital master file or database.

Delete after the necessary data have been incorporated into a master file.

3. Electronic Records That Replace Temporary Hard Copy Records.

Electronic records that replace temporary hard copy records covered by previously approved schedules that do not explicitly exclude electronic records. (If a previously approved schedule explicitly excludes electronic records, an SF 115 must be submitted to NARA. None of the authorities provided below may be applied.)

a. Scanned images

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy records.

b. Electronic formats other than scanned images

- (1) Records covered by temporary items in the GRS other than GRS 1, Item 21 (Employee Medical Folders); GRS 1, Item 22 (Statistical Summaries); GRS 1, Item 25f (Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics Files); GRS 12, Item 3 (Telecommunications Operational Files); and GRS 18, Item 5 (Top Secret Accounting and Control Files)

OR

Records covered by temporary items in an agency-specific schedule that pertain to administrative housekeeping activities.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy records.

- (2) Records covered by GRS 1, Item 21 (Employee Medical Folders); GRS 1, Item 22 (Statistical Summaries); GRS 1, Item 25f (Equal Employment Opportunity Statistics Files); GRS 12, Item 3 (Telecommunications Operational Files); and GRS 18, Item 5 (Top Secret Accounting and Control Files).

Submit SF 115 to NARA.

- (3) Digital versions of temporary still pictures, sound recordings, motion picture film, and video recordings.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy records.

- (4) Program records approved for destruction in a previously approved schedule that is media neutral and does not explicitly exclude electronic records.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period specified in the previously approved schedule.

- (5) Program records maintained in an electronic format that are not covered by Items 3(a), 3(b)(1), 3(b)(3), or 3(b)(4).

Submit SF 115 to NARA.

[NOTES: (1) Items 3(b)(1) and 3(b)(3) may be applied to electronic records consisting of information drawn from multiple previously scheduled hard copy series of administrative housekeeping records. In such instances, the electronic records must be retained for the longest retention period specified in the previously approved schedules. (2) Disposition authorities included in Item 3 may be applied to copies of records maintained on agency web sites only in the case of administrative housekeeping records. These items may not be applied to web site copies of program records, which must be scheduled separately.]

3.1 Electronic Records That Replace Permanent Hard Copy Records.

Electronic records that replace hard copy records approved as permanent in a previously approved schedule.

Permanent. Submit notification to NARA in accordance with 36 CFR 1228.31(b)(1)(i).

[NOTES: (1) Electronic versions of permanent records that are retained as recordkeeping copies must meet the standards contained in NARA guidance concerning the creation, maintenance, and transfer of permanent electronic records. (2) Item 3.1 may be applied if the electronic records consist of information drawn from multiple previously scheduled permanent series. In cases where the electronic records include information drawn from both temporary and permanent hard copy series, an agency may apply Item 3.1 or submit an SF 115 that proposes disposal of the records if the agency believes the electronic records do not warrant permanent retention. (3) This item does not cover copies of permanent records maintained on agency web sites, which must be scheduled separately.]

4. Data Files Consisting of Summarized Information.

Records that contain summarized or aggregated information created by combining data elements or individual observations from a single master file or data base that is disposable under a GRS item or is authorized for deletion by a disposition job approved by NARA after January 1, 1988, EXCLUDING data files that are created as disclosure-free files to allow public access to the data which may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

[NOTE: Data files consisting of summarized information which were created from a master file or data base that is unscheduled, or that was scheduled as permanent but no longer exists or can no longer be accessed, may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval.]

5. Records Consisting of Extracted Information.

Electronic files consisting solely of records extracted from a single master file or data base that is disposable under GRS 20 or approved for deletion by a NARA-approved disposition schedule, EXCLUDING extracts that are:

- produced as disclosure-free files to allow public access to the data; or
- produced by an extraction process which changes the informational content of the source master file or data base; which may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval. For print and technical reformat files see items 6 and 7 of this schedule respectively.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

[NOTES: (1) Records consisting of extracted information that was created from a master file or data base that is unscheduled, or that was scheduled as permanent but no longer exists or can no longer be accessed, may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval. (2) See item 12 of this schedule for other extracted data.]

6. Print File.

Electronic file extracted from a master file or data base without changing it and used solely to produce hard-copy publications and/or printouts of tabulations, ledgers, registers, and statistical reports.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

7. Technical Reformat File.

Electronic file consisting of data copied from a complete or partial master file or data base made for the specific purpose of information interchange and written with varying technical specifications, EXCLUDING files created for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

8. Backups of Files.

Electronic copy, considered by the agency to be a Federal record, of the master copy of an electronic record or file and retained in case the master file or database is damaged or inadvertently erased.

- a. File identical to records scheduled for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when the identical records have been captured in a subsequent backup file or when the identical records have been transferred to the National Archives and successfully copied.

- b. File identical to records authorized for disposal in a NARA-approved records schedule.

Delete when the identical records have been deleted, or when replaced by a subsequent backup file.

9. Finding Aids (or Indexes).

Electronic indexes, lists, registers, and other finding aids used only to provide access to records authorized for destruction by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115, EXCLUDING records containing abstracts or other information that can be used as an information source apart from the related records.

Delete with related records or when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes, whichever is later.

10. Special Purpose Programs.

Application software necessary solely to use or maintain a master file or database authorized for disposal in a GRS item or a NARA-approved records schedule, EXCLUDING special purpose software necessary to use or maintain any unscheduled master file or database or any master file or database scheduled for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when related master file or database has been deleted.

11. Documentation.

- a. Data systems specifications, file specifications, codebooks, record layouts, user guides, output specifications, and final reports (regardless of medium) relating to a master file, database or other electronic records.

- (1) Documentation relating to electronic records that are scheduled for destruction in the GRS or in a NARA-approved agency schedule.

Destroy or delete upon authorized deletion of the related electronic records or upon the destruction of the output of the system if the output is needed to protect legal rights, whichever is later.

- (2) Documentation relating to electronic records that are scheduled for permanent retention in the GRS or in a NARA-approved agency schedule.

Permanent. Transfer to the National Archives with the permanent electronic records to which the documentation relates.

- b. Copies of records relating to system security.

Use GRS 24, item 5.

12. Downloaded and Copied Data.

Derived data and data files that are copied, extracted, merged, and/or calculated from other data generated within the agency, when the original data is retained.

- a. Derived data used for ad hoc or one-time inspection, analysis or review, if the derived data is not needed to support the results of the inspection, analysis or review.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

- b. Derived data that provide user access in lieu of hard copy reports that are authorized for disposal.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

- c. Metadata or reference data, such as format, range, or domain specifications which is transferred from a host computer or server to another computer for input, updating, or transaction processing operations.

Delete from the receiving system or device when no longer needed for processing.

[NOTE: See item 5 of this schedule for other extracted data.]

13. Word Processing Files.

Documents such as letters, memoranda, reports, handbooks, directives, and manuals recorded on electronic media such as hard disks or floppy diskettes after they have been copied to an electronic recordkeeping system, paper, or microform for recordkeeping purposes.

Delete from the word processing system when no longer needed for updating or revision.

14. Electronic Mail Records.

Senders' and recipients' versions of electronic mail messages that meet the definition of Federal records, and any attachments to the record messages after they have been copied to an electronic recordkeeping system, paper, or microform for recordkeeping purposes.

Delete from the e-mail system after copying to a recordkeeping system.

[NOTE: Along with the message text, the recordkeeping system must capture the names of sender and recipients and date (transmission data for recordkeeping purposes) and any receipt data when required.]

15. Electronic Spreadsheets.

Electronic spreadsheets generated to support administrative functions or generated by an individual as background materials or feeder reports.

- a. When used to produce hard copy that is maintained in organized files.

Delete when no longer needed to update or produce hard copy.

- b. When maintained only in electronic form.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115. If the electronic version replaces hard copy records with differing retention periods and agency software does not readily permit selective deletion, delete after the longest retention period has expired.

16. Hard copy printouts created to meet ad hoc business needs.

Printouts derived from electronic records created on an ad hoc basis for reference purposes or to meet day-to-day business needs.

Destroy when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes, provided the printouts do not contain substantive information, such as substantive annotations, that is not included in the

electronic records. (Printouts that contain substantive information should be disposed of in accordance with the NARA-approved schedule that covers the series in which they are filed.)