

of the persons affected by its actions. An agency identifies vital records in the course of contingency planning activities carried out in the context of the emergency management function. In carrying out the vital records program agencies shall:

- (a) Specify agency staff responsibilities;
- (b) Ensure that all concerned staff are appropriately informed about vital records;
- (c) Ensure that the designation of vital records is current and complete; and
- (d) Ensure that vital records and copies of vital records are adequately protected, accessible, and immediately usable.

§ 1236.22 Identification of vital records.

Vital records include emergency plans and related records that specify how an agency is to respond to an emergency as well as those records that would be needed to continue operations and protect legal and financial rights. Agencies should consider the informational content of records series and electronic records systems when identifying vital records. Only the most recent and complete source of the vital information needs to be treated as vital records.

§ 1236.24 Use of vital records and copies of vital records.

Agencies shall ensure that retrieval procedures for vital records require only routine effort to locate needed information, especially since individuals unfamiliar with the records may need to use them during an emergency or disaster. Agencies also shall ensure that all equipment needed to read vital records or copies of vital records will be available in case of emergency or disaster. For electronic records systems, agencies also shall ensure that system documentation adequate to operate the system and access the records will be available in case of emergency or disaster.

§ 1236.26 Protection of vital records.

Agencies shall take appropriate measures to ensure the survival of the vital records or copies of vital records

in case of emergency or disaster. In the case of electronic records, this requirement is met if the information needed in the event of emergency or disaster is available in a copy made for general security purposes, even when the copy contains other information.

(a) *Duplication.* Computer backup tapes created in the normal course of system maintenance or other electronic copies that may be routinely created in the normal course of business may be used as the vital record copy. For hard copy records, agencies may choose to make microform copies. Standards for the creation, preservation and use of microforms are found in 36 CFR part 1230, Micrographic Records Management. The Clinger-Cohen Act (40 U.S.C. 1401, Pub. L. 104-106, *et seq.*, as amended by Pub. L. 104-208), OMB Circular A-130, and 36 CFR part 1234, Electronic Records Management, and 41 CFR part 201, subchapter B, Management and Use of Information and Records, specify protective measures and standards for electronic records.

(b) *Storage.* When agencies choose duplication as a protection method, the copy of the vital record stored off-site is normally a duplicate of the original record. Designating and using duplicate copies of original records as vital records facilitates destruction or deletion of obsolete duplicates when replaced by updated copies, whereas original vital records must be retained for the period specified in the agency records disposition schedule. The agency may store the original records off-site if protection of original signatures is necessary, or if it does not need to keep the original record at its normal place of business.

(c) *Storage considerations.* Agencies need to consider several factors when deciding where to store copies of vital records. Copies of emergency operating vital records need to be accessible in a very short period of time for use in the event of an emergency or disaster. Copies of legal and financial rights records may not be needed as quickly. In deciding where to store vital records copies, agencies shall treat records that have the properties of both categories, that is, emergency operating and legal and financial rights records, as emergency operating records.