

the legal and financial rights of the Government and of persons directly affected by the agency's activities (44 U.S.C. 3101).

(b) To perform national security emergency preparedness functions and activities (Executive Order 12656).

§ 1236.14 Definitions.

Basic records management terms are defined in 36 CFR 1220.14. As used in part 1236:

Contingency planning means instituting policies and procedures to mitigate the effects of potential emergencies or disasters on an agency's operations and records. Contingency planning is part of the continuity of operations planning required under Federal Preparedness Circulars and other guidance issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and Executive Order 12656.

Cycle means the periodic removal of obsolete copies of vital records and their replacement with copies of current vital records. This may occur daily, weekly, quarterly, annually or at other designated intervals.

Disaster means an unexpected occurrence inflicting widespread destruction and distress and having long-term adverse effects on agency operations. Each agency defines what a long-term adverse effect is in relation to its most critical program activities.

Emergency means a situation or an occurrence of a serious nature, developing suddenly and unexpectedly, and demanding immediate action. This is generally of short duration, for example, an interruption of normal agency operations for a week or less. It may involve electrical failure or minor flooding caused by broken pipes.

Emergency operating records are that type of vital records essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency. Included are emergency plans and directive(s), orders of succession, delegations of authority, staffing assignments, selected program records needed to continue the most critical agency operations, as well as related policy or procedural records that assist agency staff in conducting operations under emergency conditions

and for resuming normal operations after an emergency.

Legal and financial rights records are that type of vital records essential to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and of the individuals directly affected by its activities. Examples include accounts receivable records, social security records, payroll records, retirement records, and insurance records. These records were formerly defined as "rights-and-interests" records.

National security emergency means any occurrence, including natural disaster, military attack, technological emergency, or other emergency, that seriously degrades or threatens the national security of the United States, as defined in Executive Order 12656.

Off-site storage means a facility other than an agency's normal place of business where vital records are stored for protection. This is to ensure that the vital records are not subject to damage or destruction from an emergency or disaster affecting an agency's normal place of business.

Vital records mean essential agency records that are needed to meet operational responsibilities under national security emergencies or other emergency or disaster conditions (emergency operating records) or to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and those affected by Government activities (legal and financial rights records).

Vital records program means the policies, plans, and procedures developed and implemented and the resources needed to identify, use, and protect the essential records needed to meet operational responsibilities under national security emergencies or other emergency or disaster conditions or to protect the Government's rights or those of its citizens. This is a program element of an agency's emergency management function.

Subpart B—Vital Records

§ 1236.20 Vital records program objectives.

The vital records program is conducted to identify and protect those records that specify how an agency will

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operate in case of emergency or disaster, those records vital to the continued operations of the agency during and after an emergency or disaster, and records needed to protect the legal and financial rights of the Government and 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

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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