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Subject

1273 - VITAL RECORDS

1. Explanation of Materials Transmitted: This manual section has been developed to facilitate a pro-active Vital Records Administration Program. It includes comprehensive guidance on all components of the Vital Records Program, including identification, protection, handling, and storage of vital records. This release replaces the Bureau's former 1273 - Security Manual Section which contained outdated policies and procedures. Security, proprietary/confidential information and mineral records, previously contained in the former 1273 Manual Section, will be addressed in subsequent Bureau manual sections.
2. Reports Required: None.
3. Material Superseded: The Manual pages superseded by this release are listed under "REMOVE" below. No other directives are superseded.
4. Filing Instructions: File as directed below:

REMOVE:

All of 1273 (Rel. 1-1377)

(Total: 26 Sheets)

INSERT:

1273

(Total: 10 Sheets)

Tom Allen
Assistant Director, Management Services

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.01 Purpose. This manual section establishes the BLM Vital Records Program and provides guidance for identifying and safeguarding Bureau information which:

- A. Is vital to the continuing operation of the BLM and its Field Offices.
- B. Affects the rights and interests of employees or members of the public.
- C. Shall be available in the event of a national, regional, or local emergency.

.02 Objectives. The objectives of this manual section are to establish policies, procedures and standards that will guide the BLM efforts in effective management of its vital records. This is accomplished by:

- A. Providing guidance to ensure that records necessary for the BLM's essential functions are identified and protected to preserve the legal rights and interests of individual citizens.
- B. Providing guidelines to determine vital records status, devise protection measures, and to ensure operational continuity.
- C. Prescribing rules for safeguarding information necessary to continue BLM functions in the event of a disaster.
- D. Ensure the inventory list of vital records is current.

.03 Authority.

- A. Computer Security Act of 1987, 101 Stat 1724.
- B. 36 CFR 1236. Vital Records During an Emergency.
- C. Departmental Manual (436 DM 1). Vital Records.
- D. Departmental Manual (375 DM 19.8). Information Resources Security Program.
- E. Executive Order 11490. Assigning Emergency Preparedness Functions to Federal Departments and Agencies.
- F. Office of Management and Budget Circular A-130. Management of Federal Information Resources.

.04 Responsibility.

- A. The Director and Deputy Director are responsible for the overall BLM Vital Records Program. This responsibility is delegated through the Assistant Director, Management Services to the Chief, Information Resources Management (IRM) Division.

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B. Assistant Directors within their assigned program areas, are responsible for safeguarding Bureau vital records in accordance with the guidance in this manual.

C. Chief, Division of IRM is responsible for the overall IRM program which includes providing Bureauwide policy and direction for the safeguarding of all Bureau vital records. He/she coordinates IRM goals, objectives and activities through both the Bureau Records Administrator and the Bureau Data Administrator which he/she oversees.

D. Chief, Branch of Data, Records, and Mapping Sciences, is responsible for developing and implementing vital records policy to ensure overall management of Bureau vital records.

E. Bureau Records Administrator, is responsible for:

1. Developing guidelines for the overall management of Bureau vital records.
2. Appraising records and approving the BLM vital records listing.
3. Providing training/briefings to program managers on the vital records program.
4. Evaluating Bureau implementation of the vital records program through the Information Resources Management Review (IRMR) process.

F. State Directors, Service Center (SCD) Director, and BLM Director - Boise Interagency Fire Center (BIFC) are responsible for establishing and maintaining vital records programs within their areas of responsibility and developing local vital records and disaster recovery plans.

G. Records Administrators are responsible for:

1. Providing oversight and developing local vital records policy for maintaining continuity of Government activities in a national emergency.
2. Appraising records and recommending to the Bureau Records Administrator designation or elimination of Bureauwide records from vital records status.
3. Providing oversight in developing local vital records and disaster recovery/emergency operating plans.
4. Analyzing on an annual basis, changed, newly created, or discontinued records for vital records status.

H. Data Administrators are responsible for addressing the protection needed for vital records when developing strategic data planning.

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.05 References.

A. National Archives Records Administration (NARA's) "Evaluating a Vital Records Program" A NARA Self-Inspection Guide for Federal Agencies.

B. "Vital Records." Association of Records Managers and Administrators, Inc., 1984.

C. "Guidelines for Automated Data Processing (ADP) Physical Security and Risk Management." National Bureau of Standards. Federal Information Publications (FIP's) Pub. 31. June 1974.

D. "Guidelines for Automatic Data Processing Risk Analysis." National Bureau of Standards. Federal Information Publications (FIPs) Pub. 65. August 1979.

E. BLM Manual 1170, Emergency Operations.

F. BLM Manual 1270, Records Administration.

G. BLM Manual H-1273-1, Disaster Recovery Plan for Paper and Film Records.

.06 Policy. The BLM policy is to identify and protect those records created and or maintained that are essential to the Bureau's operations. Vital records designations will be updated as records systems/series are created, modified, or deleted, and notated in the Records Inventory Disposition System (RIDS). Vital records will be protected in the most cost effective manner with the least possible disruption to existing office operations.

.07 File and Records Maintenance. All BLM records and data will be disposed of according to the Bureau Records Schedule. All vital records are listed as such, on the RIDS inventories. Vital records and disaster recovery plans developed by each BLM Office are considered vital records and should be protected accordingly. See Manual Section 1272 for Bureau records schedules.

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.1 Program Requirements. The purpose of the vital records program is to protect records essential to organizational operations in order to maintain continuity of governmental activities. An effective vital records program should serve as a disaster prevention program thereby reducing reconstruction and recovery activities. The BLM has one of the largest vital records holdings of any Federal agency in the United States. The destruction of any of these records (financial, contractual, cadastral, etc.) would not only affect the Bureau's legal position; irreplaceable historical information would also be lost.

.11 Field Office Responsibilities. Each Field Office is responsible for establishing and maintaining its own vital records program and developing a vital records program plan to include contingency, emergency, and local disaster recovery guidance for use prior to, during, and following an emergency resulting from natural or man-made causes. The Records Administrator is responsible for developing vital records policy and overall program review. The Records Administrator will also develop and implement the vital records and disaster recovery plans in accordance with this manual and BLM Manual H-1273-1.

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.2 Vital Records Identification. Vital records may be defined as those records essential to the continued functioning of an organization (during and after an emergency), and also those records essential to the protection of the rights and interests of that organization and of the individuals for whose rights and interests it has responsibility. There are thus two types of vital records: emergency operating records and rights and interests records (see Glossary of Terms). The media for such records may be in various types, such as magnetic tape, microform or paper.

.21 Standards for Vital Records Designation. The standards listed below, may assist in determining which Bureau records may be considered vital. A record must meet at least one of these criteria to be designated as vital.

A. The potential loss of a right or interest, such as retirement or pay information, grazing or mineral leases, or debt repayment will confer vital record status upon a record or group of records.

B. Records may be considered vital for short or long periods of time. Designation of records as historical does not necessarily confer vital record status.

C. Inordinate expense and/or inability to replace critical documents accurately and within acceptable timeframes will confer vital record status.

D. Records for which the BLM is the statutory office of record are generally considered vital records. Those records for which the BLM has legal program authority are considered vital records, such as survey records or land transfer records.

E. The importance of a record, which if lost or destroyed, would severely impact the activities of the BLM, may confer vital records status.

.22 Criteria for Determining Non-Vital Records Status. The BLM may receive or handle a wide variety of records during the normal course of business. Records that are duplicated, as a matter of standard practice by local governments should be excluded from vital records designation. For example, citizenship papers may be included in some files, but the Immigration and Naturalization Service is responsible for maintenance of such records, thus, such records are not considered BLM vital records.

.23 New or Changed Record Systems. Prior to modifying records systems and during the life cycle management (LCM) development process of new systems, the following records-related issues must be addressed:

A. Value. Evaluate the importance of the record to the office or agency mission when planning the life cycle of new records. Examine in detail those records meeting the definition of rights and interest records, or those records for which special conditions or high value warrant conferring vital records status.

B. Time Periods. Vital records may need protection at varying stages of their life cycle, and for different lengths of time. For example, research and development records are often considered vital to an organization until a product is released or a report is written. Trespass cases are considered vital until either resolved, or until the case goes to court; their direct effect on rights or interests diminishes upon resolution of the case.

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C. Interdependence. Examine the effect of interdependence of the new or altered records series/systems upon other systems. Consider the loss of the records upon dependent systems. Based on this analysis, determine if the dependent record systems will need equal or better protection measures than that needed by the original system.

D. Reconstruction. Consider reconstruction capabilities in the event of damaged or destroyed data. Determine if the data can be recreated easily, and how any possible reconstruction could occur. Analyze the data to determine if the reconstructed record would meet legal and administrative standards for completeness and accuracy.

.24 Designation of Vital Records. All new records will be appraised by the Records Administrator to determine vital records status. Vital records recommendations to designate or eliminate Bureauwide records from vital records status will be submitted to the Bureau Records Administrator. Designations of vital records status will be reflected in the local RIDS. The standards listed in section .21 above may be used to analyze a record for vital record status.

.25 Vital Records Inventory. The vital records inventory is a Bureauwide inventory which identifies the vital records, locations, and mandatory protection measures. (Appendix 1 Reserved) The vital records inventory should be completed in conjunction with the BLM's RIDS. The vital records inventory will generate from the RIDS.

A. Local Vital Records. Each BLM office shall designate additional records as vital, should the records meet the criteria in section .21. Adequate identification of such records and protection methods should be designed and implemented.

.26 Annual Appraisal. Departmental Manual 436 DM 1, requires an annual review of vital records operations to determine adequacy and completeness. The vital records and disaster recovery plan shall be reviewed, as well, as the local inventory of vital records. This review should be accomplished in conjunction with the RIDS inventory update. If it is determined that there are Bureauwide records not listed which appear to meet the criteria described in section .21, such a designation shall be made by the Bureau Records Administrator.

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.3 Risk Analysis. Threats can range from vandalism, fires, floods, tornadoes, sabotage, and burst pipes, asbestos contaminants, to civil disasters and war. Local managers must strike an economic balance between the possible impact of risks, and the costs of protective measures. Disaster/threat assessment is the identification of the nature and potential of possible threats. The assessment provides management with information on which to make decisions.

.31 Threat Assessment/Risk Analysis. Periodic risk analysis shall be conducted to ensure that appropriate, cost effective safeguards are incorporated into existing and new installations. The objective of a risk analysis is to provide a measure of the relative vulnerabilities and threats to an installation so that security resources can be effectively distributed to minimize potential loss. Risk analyses may vary from an informal review of an installation to a formal fully quantified risk analysis. In determining threat assessment the following areas should be addressed:

A. Probability Estimates. Estimate the probability of occurrence and likely extent of the damage. This can be a guess of how often such an event may occur in a certain period of time.

B. Financial Estimates. Estimate the financial time, cost and impact which would result from record loss. Much of the impact might be the cost and time involved in reconstructing a record, if such reconstruction is possible. The economic loss upon the holder of the right or interest conferred by the record loss is also a consideration.

C. Safeguard Development. Devise safeguards based on the above analysis. Safeguards should be simple and cost effective. Protection methods employing standard operating procedures developed for other purposes, such as existing duplication, are encouraged.

.32 Protection Methods. Protection methods are safeguards and procedures used to keep vital records intact and available for use in the event of a disaster or emergency. Procedures most frequently used for safeguarding vital records are:

A. Duplication. Machine copying of records specifically for vital records protection to include copying computer tapes and microfilming paper records.

B. Off-Site Storage. Maintaining the original or duplicate records in a location at a sufficient distance (50-mile radius) to provide protection. If off-site commercial storage space is unavailable, another BLM office may serve as a storage facility for vital record copies.

C. Routine Distribution. Incorporate the distribution of copies of vital records into standard office procedures. No additional work or procedures are required from BLM offices.

D. Partial Routine Distribution. Machine copying of portions of records performed as routine office procedures. This method is considered to be partially adequate vital records protection. The BLM field offices may elect to develop additional protection measures or procedures.

E. On-Site Storage. Maintaining vital records in a secure, fire proof location. Also called vaulting.

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F. Alternate Storage Sites. Storage sites may be another BLM office or, if necessary, commercial storage facilities. Appropriate alternate storage sites shall be selected by considering the following criteria:

1. Proximity. The closer the alternate storage site is to the records needing protection, the higher the risk that the records in the alternate site will also be damaged in the event of a disaster. Select a site with sufficient distance to ensure maximum records safety.

2. Space. The alternate storage site should have sufficient space to store the records and adequate protection from damage, such as water, fire, vandalism, and pests. Special cabinets or locked areas must be provided for records which contain Privacy Act or proprietary/confidential material. Ensure appropriate environmental controls for computer tapes or micrographic records.

a. Building Safety. All buildings containing records must be examined for potential disasters, such as fire or water damage. Problems which can be reduced or eliminated should be resolved as soon as possible. Solutions to problems may be as simple as ensuring all records in areas with potential for water damage be stored at least three inches from the floor. Solutions, such as fire-proofing a storage area, may be more costly and require long-range budgeting but must be considered to avoid potential loss of vital records. Specific construction needs should be considered when housing vital records to ensure adequate protection of vital records.

3. Personnel. The alternate storage site should have sufficient personnel to handle the vital records, perform interfiling if necessary, destroy records or update as appropriate, and maintain a list of the holdings.

.33 Federal Records Centers (FRC's). Federal Records Centers have adequate storage facilities for computer media, such as tapes and disks, as well as for paper. Microfiche and microfilm should be shipped to the FRC in St. Louis, Missouri. Under most circumstances, older vital records stored at a FRC are periodically replaced by newer versions. Except for a few records, long shelf life or magnetic media is not a critical issue. Protection measures should make provisions for updating and cycling records at off-site storage locations.

A. Federal Records Center Locations. Field offices may ship vital records to their customary regional FRC if the center is sufficiently distant to provide adequate protection. If this is not the case, Field Offices must ship vital records to an alternate center.

B. Bureauwide Vital Records. Offices may ship vital records to the regional FRC. A blanket Bureauwide agreement allows shipment by Field Offices to the Records Centers.

C. Agreements. The FRC's will accept vital records only upon a written agreement with the BLM. Records must be "rights and interests" records. No "emergency operating records" or "security copies" will be accepted.

.34 Local Vital Records. If the best protection measure for locally vital records is determined to be off-site storage at a regional FRC, the Records Administrator must contact the individual records center to develop a mutually acceptable agreement for storage. Such agreement must specify updating requirements and disposal instructions.

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.35 Shipping Vital Records. Offices shipping vital records to another office for storage will provide the receiving office instructions for filing, maintenance, and disposal. Both offices will maintain such instructions until the disposal of the records.

.36 Disposition of Vital Records. Designated vital records that are copies or duplicates of the original records and are obsolete are considered nonrecord material may be destroyed after considering the Privacy Act or proprietary nature of such documents.

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.4 Vital Records and Disaster Recovery Planning. Vital Records and Disaster Recovery Plans shall be developed by each BLM Office. These plans shall establish procedures and assign responsibilities in the event of a threat or disaster. These plans are considered vital records and should be protected accordingly. A local or regional disaster is generally more likely to occur than a widespread national emergency. Risk analysis techniques are used to calculate potential costs and possible risks to facilities and records when evaluating local vital records (See .31). Good planning before a disaster occurs is essential to the Bureau's ability to meet legal and financial obligations.

.41 Vital Records and Disaster Recovery Plan Coordination. Each Field Office shall develop local vital records and disaster recovery plans using the guidance contained in this manual and BLM Manual H-1273-1. These plans should be coordinated with other emergency plans.

.42 Components of a Vital Records and Disaster Recovery Plan. The vital records and disaster planning process is designed to reduce the risk and magnitude of harm that could result from the loss, misuse or unauthorized access to, or modification of Bureau records or systems of records. Disaster planning has three phases. Disaster plans need to address all three phases.

A. Predisaster/Prevention Phase. The predisaster or prevention phase of the disaster plan includes:

1. Identification and physical location of vital records.
2. Adequate indexes and finding aids to vital records.
3. Responsible custodian.
4. Media on which the information resides.
5. Location of records valuable in the event of an emergency.
6. Location of alternate records, if any.
7. A contingency plan.

a. The contingency plan identifies potential risks and vulnerabilities associated with specific geographic locations (earthquakes, floods, storms, fires, chemical contaminants, etc.) and identifies applicable procedures and security or prevention measures in place.

B. Emergency Operating Procedures. The second phase of the vital records and disaster recovery plan covers emergency procedures that take place during a disaster. This phase of the plan should ensure:

1. Necessary coordination with local governments, building management, safety officers, etc.
2. The plan is in concert with building evacuation procedures.
3. Necessary equipment is available to effect adequate communications in advance of an impending disaster (cellular phones, radios, FAX machines, electronic mail, capability for conference calls, etc.).
4. Identification of who is in charge (delegations of responsibilities).
5. Emergency operating procedures are spelled out.

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C. Post Disaster (Recovery Plan). This phase of the plan addresses the procedures and equipment necessary to restore vital records. See BLM Manual Section H-1273-1. The recovery plan should contain:

1. Designations of core teams.
2. Priority of records restoration.
3. Supplies available.
4. List of local suppliers of equipment.
5. List of firms that provide emergency records restoration services.
6. Restoration procedures.

.43 Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP). The requirements for contingency plans or continuity of operations plan (COOP) for automatic data processing (ADP) systems are found in 375 DM 19.8D and OMB Circular A-130. Vital record determinations will be coordinated with continuity of operation planning efforts. Risk analysis efforts should be assessed for automated (applications) and non-automated (records) efforts simultaneously.

.44 Revision and Update of Vital Records Plans. Vital records plans should be reviewed annually and revised every time an office relocates.

.45 Program Evaluation. Evaluation of the vital records program shall be included in the IRMR process. Illustration 1 contains a review checklist which may be used as a self evaluation tool to ensure a comprehensive vital records program is in place.

.46 Program Promotion. Steps should be taken to ensure personnel are aware of the vital records program. Holding periodic management briefings, developing promotional materials, training new employees, and discussing protection measures with program offices and/or records users will ensure adequate promotion and awareness of the vital records program.

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Glossary of Terms

-E-

emergency-operating records: Vital records essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) defines emergencies as occurring in both peacetime and wartime and as deriving from natural, man-made, and nuclear causes. Besides wartime emergencies that are national in scope, there are peacetime emergencies that usually are local in scope. They include not only natural disasters, but also technological disasters, such as effects of chemical spills, asbestos contamination, etc. Peacetime emergencies also include riots and other civil disturbances.

-R-

rights-and-interests records: Vital records essential to protecting the rights and interests of an organization and of the individuals directly affected by its activities. They include records relating to social security and retirement, Federal employee payroll and leave, and insurance. They also contain information on such matters as proof of ownership, citizenship, financial interests, and legal proceedings and decisions.

-V-

vital records: Records essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization during and after an emergency, and also those records essential to protecting the rights and interests of that organization and of the individuals directly affected by its activities. Sometimes called essential records. Include both emergency-operating and rights-and-interests records. It is recommended that duplicates, or extra copies be located off-site.

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Vital Records Program Evaluation Checklist

- Yes No 1. Have the records and information essential to the continuation of business, and those affecting rights and interests, and only those records, been chosen for protection?
- Yes No 2. Are records being protected in accordance with the established vital records inventory?
- Yes No 3. Are local vital records being protected as specified?
- Yes No 4. Are off-site storage offices provided with instructions and notifications?
- Yes No 5. Are the records reviewed at least annually for vital records status?
- Yes No 6. Are records custodians notified at least annually to perform vital records functions?
- Yes No 7. Is the vital records listing updated at least annually?
- Yes No 8. Can the vital records be reconstructed following a disaster to allow normal activities to resume operation within 10 working days?
- Yes No 9. Is a list of firms who can provide freeze-drying or other document reconstruction services readily available?
- Yes No 10. Does a vital records program plan exist, are all three phases addressed: prevention, emergency operating procedures, and disaster recovery?
- Yes No 11. Can major in-process project records affecting rights and interests, that were active at the time of the disaster be reconstructed?
- Yes No 12. Are stored vital records as up-to-date as specified in the Local Vital Records Inventory?
- Yes No 13. Are storage containers properly labelled?
- Yes No 14. Are storage containers indexed and arranged for easy retrieval?
- Yes No 15. Have all buildings housing records been examined for potential records-related problems, such as fire or water damage?
- Yes No 16. Have solutions to records-related problems been applied either in a timely manner, or are currently in the process of being applied?