



Records Management Tip

Records management advice prepared for GNWT records professionals by the Records Management Unit, PWS

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Records Centre Series

Scheduling Unscheduled Records in the Records Centre

Background Information

For many years, Public Works and Services (PWS) accepted unscheduled records for storage in the Records Centre. This changed in 1995, when it was decided that all administrative records must be scheduled using the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) before they are sent for storage. Unscheduled operational records could still be sent in for storage. Storing so many unscheduled records has put the Records Centre in a difficult position: at current rates, the four Records Centres will full within six years.

The Records Centre series gives you information on how to access the Records Centre's storage, retrieval, and disposition services.

In the mid-1990s, PWS went through an exercise that it called the Managed Clearance Project. This involved scheduling and disposing of records based on a review of the contents of the boxes. At the time, departments were told to open each box, review the contents, and verify the transfer lists of all boxes that were not scheduled by an existing Records Disposition Authority. If a department decided that the records were no longer needed, PWS would put forward a One-Time Records Schedule to the Public Records Committee to dispose of the records.

While the Managed Clearance Project led to the disposal of a large number of unscheduled records, it did not solve the problem. New unscheduled records are still being sent into storage. Currently, 16,000 boxes do not have retention schedules assigned to them in iRIMS. IRIMS is the software package that PWS uses to manage the Records Centres.

How Has This Happened?

This problem arose for several reasons. Firstly, many government records do not have Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS) developed for them. Secondly, up until 2001 Public Works and Services did not track the retention schedules that apply to each box in iRIMS. As a result, there are boxes in the Records Centre that may have retention schedules, but they have not been identified. Thirdly, new ORCS have not been used to schedule records that are already in the Records Centre.

What Happens if We Do Not Do Something About This?

The Records Centres will be full within six years if nothing changes. Before that happens, PWS will have to restrict access to the Records Centres, and only accept scheduled records. Departments are encouraged to develop ORCS before restrictions are put in place. Otherwise they may have to find alternate storage for their unscheduled records. Storing records outside of the Records Centres can be expensive, and raises the possibility that records could be lost or inappropriately destroyed.

What Can We Do About It?

PWS has a plan to schedule the unscheduled records. Unlike the Managed Clearance Project of ten years ago, this new plan does not require a physical box-by-box review for most of the boxes. Also, this new project is not aimed at disposing of records. Rather, the goal is to assign retention schedules to the boxes in the Records Centre, recognizing that disposal is an ongoing activity.

Step 1: The Records Coordinator or the Records Management Section of PWS will review box listings, identify records that can be scheduled using ARCS, and assign retention schedules to each box. It is not necessary to re-do the lists and assign retention schedules to each file.

Step 2: The Records Coordinator or the Records Management will review box listings, identify records that can be scheduled using an approved ORCS, and assign retention schedules to each box. Again, it is not necessary to re-do the lists and assign retention schedules to each file.

Steps 1 and 2 involve a quick review of existing box lists. As many as 150 boxes can be reviewed and scheduled during a day. No boxes will be disposed of at the end of either Step 1 or Step 2. At the beginning of April, Records Management will run a report on all boxes that are eligible for disposition, and send a copy of that report to each department. At that point, Departments will have the opportunity to review any boxes whose contents are in question, and determine if they are eligible for disposal. Boxes will be disposed of following normal disposition procedures.

Step 3: The Records Coordinator develops ORCS that address the remaining boxes in the Records Centre. One-Time Schedules may be developed under certain circumstances. In particular, One-Time Schedules are appropriate where programs no longer exist, where responsibility for a program has been transferred from departments that no longer exist, or where a program has changed substantially since the records were originally created. Developing schedules may require a physical review of the contents of the boxes.

Once the new On-going or One-Time schedules have been approved, the Records Coordinator or the Records Management section will assign retention schedules to the remaining boxes.

Help Available from PWS

Records Management, PWS, can provide listings of all unscheduled boxes on request. They can also provide electronic (PDF) versions of their copy of the Records Centre Box Inventory Forms. Where departments are not able to perform Steps 1 and 2, Records Management will do it for them.