



Records Management Tip

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

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**Program
Management Series**

Implementing the Management of Electronic Information Policy

Part 1

Implementing the policy

The next few Records Management Tips will look at how to implement each of the principles in the Management of Electronic Information policy.

The Program Management series looks at various media-specific issues and special issues relating to records management.

Principle # 1

All electronic information and electronic mail, created or received in the course of conducting government business, are government records, subject to the same types of legislation, audit and legal processes as records in other formats.

What are we managing?

Before we can implement the policy, we have to know what it is that we are trying to manage. The policy defines electronic records as a record expressed in an electronic digital format, which is stored in a form that only a computer can process. Some examples of electronic records include the following:

- Word-processing documents (correspondence, reports, etc.)
- E-mail messages
- Spreadsheets
- Digital photographs or other graphical images
- CAD files
- Digital sound or video recordings
- Any other computer file that stores information.

An electronic record could also come from a paper documents or audio or videotape which was digitized at some point in the business process. Databases are not records, but the reports that come off of them may be records.

As records of our business activities, electronic records are affected by the same legal, audit, and legislative requirements as paper records.

- They may be presented as evidence in court proceedings.
- Auditors may require them during audits.

- They may be requested as part of an Access to Information request.
- Laws that require records to be kept apply to electronic records equally as to their paper counterparts.

How do we implement Principle # 1?

Education is the key to implementing this principle. All employees need to be aware that the electronic documents that they create and use while doing their jobs are government records.

Principle # 2

Each government employee is responsible for:

- o Recording all actions, transactions, and decisions of government.
- o Adhering to legislation, policies, standards, guidelines and procedures that concern the management of all recorded information.

Creating Records

Principle # 2 states that employees are responsible for documenting the work that they do. Departments should study their business processes and identify the records that should be created as work is being carried out. Employees need to understand which records they should keep and why those records are needed. Supervisors should ensure that appropriate records are being kept and that laws, policies, and procedures are being followed.

How do we implement Principle # 2?

Employees need to be trained on how to identify the records that they need to keep. Some of this training will be department-specific, and should be based on an analysis of the department's business functions. Records are a product of the work that we do. In order to understand which records need to be created and kept, we need to understand how work is being done and how information is being used. Employees need to be able to distinguish between the records that they must keep and the records that they can delete from their e-mail inboxes or off of the network.

A department's Records Coordinator is in the best position to deliver this kind of department-specific training. Records Coordinators understand the records that the department creates. They are also familiar with the best methods for organizing those records.

Departments also need to have records classification systems in place. These systems are the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) and department-specific Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS). ARCS and ORCS help employees identify and organize the electronic records that they need to keep. A department that does not have ORCS in place will have difficulty in bringing its electronic records under control.