

## Filing Cabinets and Other Records Storage Equipment

### Are You Buying New Filing Cabinets?

We have a few pointers to help you pick the filing cabinets you need.

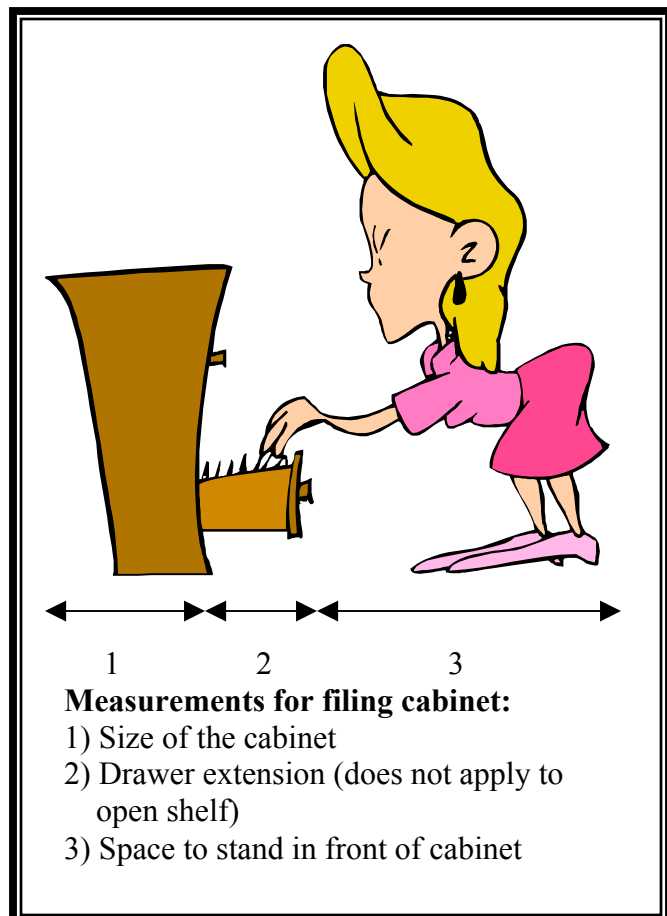
There are four commonly used types of filing cabinets for storing paper records.

1. **Vertical Filing Cabinets:** this is the traditional filing cabinet. Files are placed or hung from front to back.
2. **Lateral Filing Cabinets:** these filing cabinets are also common. The files are placed sideways, and are usually read from left to right.
3. **Open Shelf Cabinets:** in this type of cabinet, files are stored on open shelves similar to a bookcase. They come in open and locking models. In box-type systems, files are placed in boxes that hang on a rack or frame.
4. **Mobile Filing Systems:** mobile filing systems are designed to maximize storage space and minimize retrieval times. They are most commonly used in central filing rooms.

Each type of cabinet has good and bad points. If you choose your filing cabinets carefully, you will increase the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of your department's records management program.

### Too many choices! What should I buy?

There are several things that you should consider when buying filing cabinets. They also apply to other records storage equipment, such as map cabinets and microfilm cabinets.



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**Space Restrictions:** Office space is expensive, so you should try to choose filing cabinets that make the best use of your space. When you measure for filing cabinets, remember to include the space that you need to pull out a drawer and to stand in front of the cabinet.

**Storage Requirements:** To figure out how much storage space you need, first inventory your active records. Then figure out your future needs by looking at how fast the volume of files grows each year. For example, if you expect that the volume of active files will grow by ten percent per year over the next five years, you will need 50 percent more storage space than you have now. It is a good idea to include an extra 15 percent more storage space for contingencies.

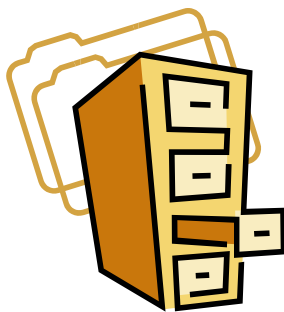
**Security Requirements:** You may have certain groups of records that require a higher degree of security. These records should be stored in locking cabinets. You may want to store vital or essential records in equipment that has a high fire rating. Secure and fire safe cabinets are more expensive, so they should only be purchased to meet a specific need.

**Equipment Costs:** You should figure out your department's storage, space, and security requirements before you begin to look how much the filing cabinets will cost. Different types of cabinets have different storage capacities. When you compare prices, adjust the figures so that you are comparing costs for equal amounts of file storage space.

**Operational Costs:** The main ongoing operational cost is for the supplies. Legal-sized and letter-sized file folders do not cost the same amount. Likewise, end-tab and top-tab file folders are different prices.

**Physical Aspects of Records:** In some cases, the physical format of the records will make your purchasing decisions for you. Special media, like maps, drawings, videos, films, microfilm, and diskettes, may require special storage equipment.

**Retrieval Efficiency:** You should also think about how many people will be using the cabinets, and how they will retrieve records from it. Open shelf filing cabinets lets a large number of people access the files at the same time. Vertical, lateral, and mobile cabinets work best if only one or two people are accessing the files at the same time. You may also need to take someone's physical abilities into consideration. For example, a person in a wheelchair may not be able to reach files that are in the top drawer of a tall cabinet.



### **Final thoughts**

Check with your Records Coordinator to find out if your department has standardized its filing cabinets. Also remember that equipment purchases are subject to the GNWT's purchasing policies. Talk to your contract officer before buying filing cabinets.

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For more information, contact your department's records coordinator, or contact the Records Management Unit at 920-3009 or 873-7446