



Records Management Bulletin

Records management advice prepared for GNWT employees
by the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services

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Does it itch? A Diagnosis and Treatment Guide to Records Management Diseases

Warning:

This bulletin takes a humorous look at Records Management. No offence was meant.



Records management diseases are widespread in modern office environments. Symptoms often appear in clusters and may be difficult to treat with conventional therapies. This fact sheet describes some of the common records management diseases, their symptoms, and standard treatments.

Corporate Alzheimer's Disease

Symptoms:

Loss of corporate memory; inability to make decisions based on previous experiences.

Causes:

Corporate Alzheimer's Disease (CAD) can be triggered by many factors. The main cause is a failure to keep records that document policies, procedures, decisions, and the results of those decisions. Staff turnover is the leading factor in the onset of CAD. In rare cases, CAD can be brought on by an emergency or disaster that damages an organization's records.

Prevention:

Make sure that policies, procedures, decisions, and program evaluations are regularly written and reviewed. These records should be managed as part of a records management program. Business resumption planning and a vital records program will prevent loss of records due to an emergency.

Treatment:

CAD is difficult to treat. Once the information is lost, it is very difficult to reconstruct. Employees, clients, vendors, and consultants may be able to provide missing information. However, the records may be unreliable and incomplete.

Kleptomania, Records Management Variant

Symptoms:

An urge to take files from the office under the assumption that they belong to the employee.

Causes:

Kleptomania is most often seen when an employee changes jobs or leaves the organization. It is caused by the mistaken notion that the files that an employee works on belong to him.

Prevention:

Establish an exit procedure for employees who are leaving the department. All records (paper and electronic) should be returned to the office filing cabinets or saved on shared network directories. E-mail messages should be reviewed and filed if necessary.

Treatment:

Contact the employee and request the return of the files. Removing information from the GNWT without the Public Records Committee's permission is a violation of the **Archives Act**.

Obsessive-Compulsive Records Disorder

Symptoms:

An obsessive need to keep copies of documents in "personal" files.

Causes:

The main cause of the records management form of Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder is a distrust of the office's filing system. Patients believe that if a document is filed in the office filing system it will be impossible to find again.

Prevention:

Teach all new employees how to use the filing system. Written procedures also help prevent this illness. Periodic reviews of the filing system will locate any problems. If steps are taken to address the problems, employees will not lose faith in the system.

Treatment:

In epidemic cases, it may be necessary to revise the filing system so that it is user-friendly. In isolated cases, one-on-one employee training is usually successful in convincing employees to use the filing system and avoid hoarding records.

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

Paper Cuts

Symptoms:

A short, straight, shallow cut, usually on fingers or hands. Frequently not noticed until hands are immersed in water. Deeper cuts may cause bleeding.

Causes:

Paper cuts are caused when the skin is brushed against the edge of a piece of paper.

Treatment:

Shallow cuts may be left to heal. Deeper cuts that involve bleeding should be cleaned with an antiseptic and bandaged.

Pseudo-Reynaud's Disease

Symptoms:

Fingers coloured blue or purple.

Causes:

A common ailment when mimeographs were used to produce copies. Hands were stained blue or purple by the ink used in mimeograph machines. Rare now that copies are produced using photocopiers and computer printers.

Treatment:

Wash hands. Colour will eventually fade.



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