



Records Management Bulletin

Records management advice prepared for GNWT employees
by the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services
No. 29 – June 2004

Records Management for New Employees

Welcome to your new position with the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). Over the next few months, you will be learning about the government's many programs, services, policies and procedures. Some of these procedures will involve records management. This bulletin gives you a quick overview of the GNWT's records management program.

What is Records Management?

First, let's begin by talking about what is a record. A record is any information that has been written down or recorded in some way. We keep records to show us what decisions we made, what actions we took, what kind of transactions have happened, and what advice we have given.

A record can take many forms, such as:

- Paper documents
- E-mail and electronic documents
- Photographs and digital images
- Sound recordings
- Video records

The GNWT creates and receives hundreds of records every day. After a while, the records start to pile up, and it becomes difficult to find anything. This is where records management comes in.

Records management's goal is to help you find the right information, at the right time, in the right format, and for the least possible cost.

Why should I worry about Records Management?

Records management affects every employee. We all use records to do our jobs, and we get upset when we cannot find what we need. When you manage your records, you make life easier for you and your co-workers.

As a civil servant, you have a legal obligation to keep good records:

- The **Archives Act** makes it illegal to throw out government records unless you have received approval to do so from the Public Records Committee.
- The **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act** obliges you make information available to the public.

Your own department's legislation and policies may also affect how you create and keep records.



Okay, so what do I need to know about Records Management?

There are a few things that every employee should know about records management. You should know who is responsible for records management in your department. You should also know how the filing system works. Finally, you should understand that you have a role to play in managing your department's records, even if filing is not in your job description.

Who is in charge around here anyway?

Every department has a Records Coordinator. In some of the smaller departments this is not a full-time position. The Records Coordinator's duties vary between departments, but in general they look after the following:

- Writing operational records classification systems.
- Implementing file classification systems.
- Arranging the transfer of older files into the Government Records Centre for storage.
- Arranging the destruction of records or their transfer to the NWT Archives.

In many departments, the Records Coordinator is also the Access to Information Coordinator.

What do I need to know about the filing system?

First, talk to your Records Coordinator to find out how the filing system works in your department. We only have space to provide a brief outline here.

The government creates two different kinds of records: **administrative** and **operational**. Administrative records are records that are common to all departments. They tend to be the types of records that are used to keep the office running. Since these records are found in all departments, it makes sense to have everyone file them the same way. So, most departments use the **GNWT Administrative Records Classification System (GNWT ARCS)** to manage their administrative records.

Operational records, on the other hand, are unique to each department. You create operational records when you do something that relates to one of your department's mandated functions. So, if a law or a policy says that your department is supposed to run a certain program, then any records that you have on that program are operational records.

Since each department has different operational records, we cannot create a single filing system for them. Records Coordinators create **Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS)** to help you organize and manage operational records.

You can use the GNWT ARCS and ORCS to create the file numbers that you use to file records.

The GNWT ARCS and ORCS are also **retention schedules**. Retention schedules tell you how long records should be kept. They also explain how the records should be handled when they are

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

no longer needed. Retention schedules make sure that we are not keeping information longer than necessary.

What is my role in all this?

You create and receive records as part of your job. Your responsibility is to make sure that the records are included in your department's records management program. This includes your electronic and e-mail records as well as anything you print on paper.

Talk to your Records Coordinator, take courses, and read the Records Management Bulletins to find out more. You can also check out the Records Management website:

<http://www.pws.gov.nt.ca/records/index.htm>

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