



# Records Management Bulletin

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

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## Policy on the Management of Electronic Information

### Managing electronic information

Electronic records are information that has been saved in a digital format. Only a computer or other computer-based device can read them. They are a concern for the government because they are easy to create, they multiply quickly, and people tend to either keep everything or nothing.

In order to address these and other issues, the Informatics Policy Committee (IPC) approved the **Policy on the Management of Electronic Information** in May 2005. You can read the policy on the Public Works and Services website: <http://www.pws.gov.nt.ca/records/policies.htm>.

### Purpose of the policy

IPC approved the policy because it believes that the government needs to do a better job of managing its electronic records.

The policy points out that the same records management principles apply to electronic and paper records. Why? Well, we create and use electronic records for the same reasons that we create and use paper records. Also, the same laws apply to records in all formats. It makes sense to manage all records in the same way.

### Electronic records are government records

The policy reminds us that electronic records are government records. This means that:

- We need to be consistent in the way that we manage them.
- They should be classified using the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) and Operational Records Classification systems (ORCS).
- They can only be deleted or transferred to the NWT Archives if they are scheduled in ARCS, ORCS, or the Transitory Records Schedule.

### Everyone is responsible

It used to be easy to look after records. Every office had one or two support people who looked after the filing. Computers have changed this. Now we all decide where and how to save electronic records. These days everyone is a file clerk.

The policy recognizes the fact that we all have a role in managing electronic records. We must all

#### Recorded Information Management Policy

The Recorded Information Management Policy provides overall guidance on how the government manages records and information. It is available at

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

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create records of our actions and decisions. We must also follow the laws, policies, standards, guidelines, and procedures that apply to records.

### **Managing records is part of the business**

We create records while we are doing government business. Because of this, we need to include records and information management policies and practices into the design of new business systems.

The policy states that departments must be able to keep electronic records over the entire length of time that they are needed. This length of time will vary according to our business needs. Departments also must have systems that can capture “tombstone” data about electronic records, such as the author and the date that a record was created and used.

### **Records that are born electronic should stay electronic**

If a system is keeping records in a digital format, then the records should be managed in a digital format. In other words, it is not always necessary to print and file hard copies. Keep in mind that it might be necessary to retain some hard copy records for legal purposes.

### **Systems must be documented**

Departments must keep documentation on how they are looking after their electronic records. This includes:

- Assigning responsibilities within the department for managing electronic records.
- Designing systems and procedures that will allow for the retention and disposal of electronic records.

### **What Can I Do?**

There are a number of things that you can do to help implement this policy:

- Read the policy and the guidelines that go with it.
- Speak to your Records Coordinator. He or she is in the best position to give you advice on how to implement the policy.
- Take records management courses. Public Works and Services offers a number of general records management courses for all employees. To register, log on to the government’s training calendar: <http://www.pws.gov.nt.ca/trainingcalendar/trainingcalendar.asp>. The most relevant courses are:
  - o Introduction to Records Management (required for all other courses).
  - o Administrative and Operational Records Classification Systems.
  - o Managing Electronic Records.
- Read future Records Management Bulletins and Records Management Tips. Over the next few months we will be looking at ways to implement the policy.



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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