



Records Management Bulletin

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

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Reviewing and Approving Records Dispositions

This bulletin was written for directors and managers who may be asked to review and approve the disposition of records.

Record Dispositions

Consider this scenario: your department's records coordinator tells you that your division has records that are eligible for disposition, and ask you to review the Box Inventory Forms. He or she also asks you to sign a letter authorizing the disposition of the records. You are left with a stack of forms to read and a letter to sign.

What do you do?

What is Disposition?

Disposition, or final disposition, is the last step in the life cycle of a record. The life cycle refers to the stages that a record passes through, from its creation, through a period of frequent or active use, to a period of low or semi-active use. Records have reached their final disposition stage when they are of no further use to the department.

In the GNWT, disposition takes two forms:

- Transfer to the Northwest Territories Archives' collection; or
- Destruction.

In either case, the end result is that your department no longer owns the records.

The length of time that records should be kept by a department and the final disposition of the records are described in records disposition authorities (RDA). Examples of RDAs include the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) and Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS).

Records cannot be disposed of unless they meet the timeline identified in a RDA.

Reviewing a Disposition

By the time that you see a disposition package, your records coordinator has already reviewed the files and confirmed that they have reached the end of their life cycle. However, there are many things that your records coordinator does not know about your program or your needs. Therefore, he or she will ask you to verify that the records can be disposed of.

When you review a disposition, verify three things:

- The records are no longer needed to deliver a program or service.
- The program is not under investigation or subject to litigation or other legal action.
- The program is not being audited.

In the first case, disposing of the records could affect your division's ability to deliver a program. In the second case, you could create the appearance that you have deliberately destroyed evidence. In the third case, you could be criticized in the auditor's report for poor information management.

How Do I Read the Box Inventory Form?

A sample form is shown below. The top part of the form contains a description of the box that the files are in. The bottom part of the form lists the files that are in the box.

For your purposes, the most important parts of the form are the File Number, Volume Number, the File Title or Description of the Record, and the File From and To dates.

- **ARCS/ORCS File Number** - this is the classification number or file number that was assigned to the file. If the file titles are not descriptive enough for you to make a decision, look up the file numbers in ARCS and ORCS. ARCS and ORCS provide a description of the files and additional file title information.
- **Volume Number** – this will tell you if this is the first file in a series of files on the same topic. You may want to find out if there are more recent files on the same topic.
- **File Title or Description of the Record** – this will show the title of the file as it appears on the file label. Additional descriptive information may have been added to help identify a file.
- **File Dates** – the From date is the date on which the file was opened or the date of the first document in the file. The To date is the date on which the file was closed or the date of the last document in the file. The Other Close date is used in special circumstances to calculate disposition dates.

Department information	Division Prefix: PWS01		Department & Division: PWS – Records Management		BOX INVENTORY FORM			Dept Reference #: 2005-01		IRIMS Transfer ID: 9191	
	Temp Box #: 1		Box Content Description: Administrative Records					Box Notes / Comments:			
Box information	Box Type: BOX	Content Type (Medium): PAP	Disposition Authority (RDA #): 1995-32	Originals (Masters) / Copies: Masters	Box Date (mm/yyyy): From 04/1996 To 03/1998 Other Close 05/1998			Box Retention: A 3 SA 4 FD ASD			Box Disposition Date: 05/2005
	Item #	ARCS/ORCS File Number	Vol #	File Title or Description of Record	From	To	Other Close	A	SA	FD	File Disposition Date
File information	1	1025-40-01	1	Records Management	10/1997	12/1997	03/1998	S/O	7	ASD	03/2005
	2	1145-30-01	3	Public Records Committee	04/1997	03/1998		3	4	ASD	03/2005
	3	1145-30-03	2	Recorded Information Management Committee	04/1997	03/1998		3	4	ASD	03/2005
	4	1145-30-05	1	Interdepartmental Committee of Access Coordinators	04/1996	03/1997		3	4	ASD	03/2004
	5	1145-30-05	2	Interdepartmental Committee of Access Coordinators	04/1997	03/1998		3	4	ASD	03/2005
	6	1155-20-01	1	Federal/Provincial/Territorial Records Council	04/1997	03/1998		3	4	ASD	03/2005
	7	1350-25-01	1	Records Management Annual Report	02/1995	05/1995		3	7	ASD	05/2005

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

Contact your records coordinator if you have any questions about the forms.

What if Everything is Fine?

If you do not have any concerns about disposing of the records, sign the letter and return it to your records coordinator.

What if I Have Concerns?

If you have concerns about disposing of any of the records, raise the matter with your records coordinator. Your records coordinator will remove any files that you still need from the disposition.

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