



# Records Management Bulletin

Records management advice prepared for GNWT employees  
by the Records Management Unit of Public Works and Services  
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## Retention and Disposition of E-mail

### Stop! Don't Hit the Delete Key!

E-mail messages are government records. As government records, they are subject to the same retention and disposition rules as paper records.

According to the **Archives Act**, employees cannot destroy records, including electronic records, without the approval of the Public Records Committee. The Public Records Committee grants approval to destroy records by approving Records Disposition Authorities.

These records disposition authorities have two parts:

- A records classification system to help you organize your records.
- Retention schedules that identify how long they should be kept, and how they should ultimately be disposed of.

Examples of records disposition authorities include the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS), and Operational Records Classification Systems (ORCS).

Your e-mail messages must be kept according to the retention periods set out in the records disposition authorities.

### But My Inbox is Full!

You do not have to keep every e-mail message that you receive. The records that need to be kept are called **substantive** records, or official records. These records include the e-mail messages that you create or receive that directly impact your work. These records must be moved into your department's ARCS/ORCS system.

If you have a chain of e-mail messages that repeat one another, you only need to keep the last message that contains all of the previous messages.

In addition to the substantive records, your Inbox contains **transitory** records. You may delete transitory records at your discretion.

Contact your department's records coordinator if you have any questions about which e-mail messages you should keep.

More information on managing e-mail messages can be found in the Managing Electronic Mail Messages Guidelines: <http://www.pws.gov.nt.ca/records/policies.htm>.

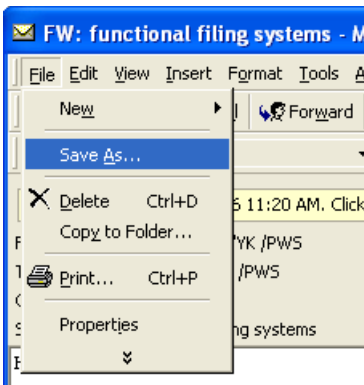
For more information about Substantive and Transitory records, see Bulletin #4.

## Move Substantive Records Onto the Network

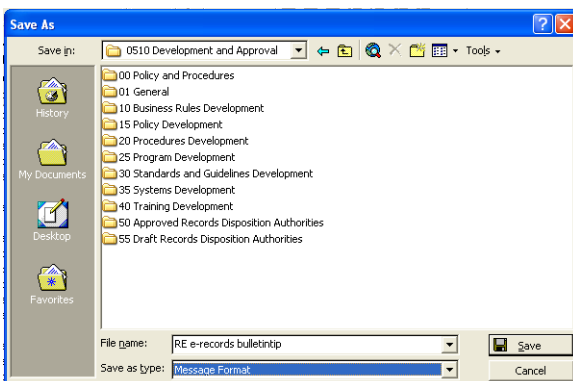
Substantive records should be moved out of your Outlook mailbox and onto a shared network directory. This will give your co-workers access to the records. It will also enable your records coordinator to review the records and apply retention periods to the records.

To move your substantive records onto the network, follow these steps:

1. Find the last e-mail message or the most complete e-mail message.
2. Open the message.
3. Click on the **File** menu, and pick the **Save As** option.



4. In the Save As window, browse for the appropriate directory on the network.



Type in a file name. Save as a **Message Format** (.msg) file type.

5. Click the **Save** button.

Attachments should be saved separately, so that they are easy to locate.

## How Should I Organize My Records on the Network?

The best way to organize your records on the network is to create network folders that match the classifications in ARCS and ORCS. This can be done by creating folders and sub-folders for the primaries that you use in ARCS and ORCS. Organizing your network this way makes it easier to

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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

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locate the information that you need. It also makes it easier to apply retention and disposition rules to the electronic records.

### **Can I Use the Archives Feature in Outlook?**

The archives feature in Outlook is one way to clean-up your Outlook inbox and folders. However, there are problems with it.

First, the archives feature moves e-mail messages out of your Outlook folders and into a separate “archive.pst” file. This file is usually kept on your computer’s hard drive or on a personal network drive. This means that the information that is in the archive.pst file is not available to your co-workers. Important information may be lost when you change computers, or if you leave your position.

Second, the archives feature is not linked to a retention schedule. It removes e-mail messages from your Outlook folders based on a date criteria that is usually much shorter than the retention period in ARCS or ORCS. If you delete e-mail messages using the archives feature, you may be violating the **Archives Act** and other, program specific, legislation.

Saving individual messages onto the network is a much more reliable method for keeping your e-mail messages. By saving your messages onto the network, you will ensure that the information that needs to be kept will be kept.

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