



Basic Guidelines for Proper Storage of Records

South Carolina Department of Archives and History
Archives and Records Management Division

Introduction

The minimum standards for storage of the public records of South Carolina are established by [SC Code of Regulations, Chapter 12, Article 10](#). The following information provides basic guidelines for housing materials in a manner that minimizes threats to the continued preservation of state and local government public records.

Physical Environment

- The building should be well-maintained and with a roof free of leaks.
- The fire-suppression system should be inspected regularly and properly maintained. A fire detection and alarm system should be in place. Staff should work with the local fire department to develop a fire safety program.
- Adequate protection from theft and vandalism must be provided through means such as locks, security systems and limiting access to storage areas.
- The area should be free of pests and have a pest control program in place.
- There should be no smoking, eating, or drinking allowed in records storage areas.
- To prevent degradation from UV exposure, records should be stored in a clean, dry, location away from direct sunlight or fluorescent UV light. Lights should be turned off when not in use.
- Records should not be stored in areas subject to flooding or temperature extremes such as basements and attics.

Climate

- Poor air circulation combined with high heat and relative humidity encourages mold growth and increases pest activity.
- If the facility is not climate-controlled, it should be well-ventilated and every effort should be made to guard against extreme fluctuations in temperature and relative humidity.
- All possible measures should be taken to keep the temperature below 75°F and relative humidity below 60%.
- Optimal levels are 55-65°F and 35-45% relative humidity.

Records Storage

- Records should be stored at least three inches from the floor on sturdy shelving, cabinets, or pallets.
- For protection from environmental and light contaminants, records should be covered or boxed when not in use.
- No more than three boxes should be in one stack.
- Heavy volumes should be stored on their sides so as to prevent spine damage. Volumes stored upright should have secure bookends ensuring that they remain in an upright position.
- Records should not be stored near exposed water or steam pipes that may leak, nor in areas adjacent to furnaces or boilers unless separated by a fire wall.
- Records exhibiting active mold growth should be isolated and in-house or professional salvage procedures begun as soon as possible.

For additional questions regarding storage requirements, contact Conservation Archivist Kathryn Graham at 803-896-5563 or KGraham2@scdah.sc.gov.