

General Records Retention Schedule for Data Processing Records Revised 2026



South Carolina Department of Archives and History

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**General Records Retention Schedule
for Data Processing Records Revised 2026**

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Introduction

The Archives and Records Management Division of the Department of Archives and History has prepared this general retention schedule to give state and local government agencies and state-supported colleges and universities the authorization to retain and dispose of common data processing records. The schedule provides a timetable that will allow agencies to regularly dispose of records of non-permanent value and designates permanently valuable records, which should be properly protected. In preparing the schedule, the Division consulted with representatives from various state and local agencies. This general schedule supersedes all general and specific schedules approved previously for the same records series.

Statutory authority

Section 30-1-90(B) of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended, within the [South Carolina Public Records Act](#), authorizes the Department of Archives and History to issue general schedules for records series common to agencies and subdivisions. Agencies and subdivisions must be allowed to opt out of these general schedules and proceed pursuant to the provisions of subsection (A) in the establishment of specific records schedules.

Definitions

A records retention schedule describes one or several records series, shows the length of time the records should be retained, and indicates their final disposition. Schedules are of two types—specific and general.

- **Specific Records Retention Schedules** — These schedules are prepared and approved by the Department of Archives and History specifically for records that are unique to your agency; your agency's name will appear on these. To review or create specific schedules, contact the Records Management Division at 803-896-6128 or rm@scdah.sc.gov.
- **General Records Retention Schedules** — These schedules are issued by the Department of Archives and History and may be used as needed by any state or local agency. The titles and descriptions of record series listed in the general schedule may not exactly reflect the titles and descriptions you use. When a general schedule applies to records already covered under a specific schedule, the general schedule will supersede the specific schedule unless you wish to opt out of using the general schedule. Agencies may also create additional specific schedules to use instead of the general schedules if the existing general schedule description or retention does not meet their records needs or to avoid conflict with other laws and regulations.

General schedule format

Each record retention schedule listed in the general schedule is presented in the following format:

- Part A — Record series number and series title: The first line includes the individual retention schedule number and the title most commonly used by agencies for each record series. A record series is a group of related records that share a common purpose, subject, or function.
- Part B — Description: A short statement describing the use and informational content of the record series. In many cases, the description also specifies the office that creates the series.
- Part C — Retention: Indicates the minimum length of time that records should be retained by the agency before their final disposition can take place.

Application of general schedule

- This schedule may be used by:
 - any department of the state; any state board, commission, agency, and authority; any public or governmental body of the state; any organization, corporation, or agency supported in whole or in part by public funds or expending public funds, including committees, subcommittees, advisory committees, and any quasi-governmental body of the state
 - any state-supported college, university, technical college, and any affiliated institutions supported by public funds or expending public funds
 - any political subdivision of the state, including counties, municipalities, townships, school districts, special purpose districts, and any quasi-governmental subdivisions.
- Whenever the term “agency” is used in this publication it refers to all of the above.
- Before using this general schedule, you should contact your agency records officer, who should coordinate all activities relating to the retention and disposition of agency records and function as a liaison with the Department of Archives and History in administering the agency’s records management program.

How to use the general schedule

1. Study the general schedule and compare it with your specific schedules, if you have any, to determine which schedules you will use. If you wish to use your specific schedules instead of the general schedule, follow the established procedure for those specific schedules.
2. Locate and examine all your records.
3. Match each records series with the title and description on the general schedule. The general schedule titles may not reflect exactly the titles you use; however, the record content should be the same as the general schedule description.
4. Follow the records disposition process outlined below, which should be carried out periodically - at least once a year – using the forms located at <https://scdah.sc.gov/records-management/forms>:
 - a. Non-permanent records: Complete a [Report on Records Destroyed Form \(ARM-11\)](#) and submit it to the Records Management Division at rm@scdah.sc.gov.
 - b. Permanent (archival) records: After your permanently valuable records become inactive, you should transfer them to an archival repository. The Department of Archives and History may accept the transfer of records with a permanent retention on a case-by-case basis. Contact the Records Management Division for further instructions.

Explanation of terms used in retention statements

- “Until no longer needed for reference” — Records are to be kept until you decide they have no further reference value.
- “‘X’ years, destroy.” — Records may be destroyed x number of years after creation, provided any administrative, legal, and fiscal retention requirements have been met. Destruction of electronic records means rendering them unintelligible or inaccessible without the use of a forensic data recovery measure.
- “Master File” – The “master file” refers to the official versions of records which are subject to the retention requirements outlined in the General Retention Schedules. Other versions of the master files are considered duplicates or convenience copies, which can be destroyed when no longer needed for reference.
- “Record Version” – Records created by one entity and forwarded to another entity for administrative purposes will have different retention requirements based on the use of those records. The record version refers to the retention of the records by the entity that owns or possesses the records as established by an agency-specific retention schedule,

and in some cases, the record version will be retained permanently by the Department of Archives and History.

Special provisions

- Opting out — You may opt out of using general schedules and continue to use already approved specific schedules that cover the same records as the general schedules. You may also opt out of using general schedules if you wish to establish new specific schedules instead for the same records. Submit a [General Schedule Opt-Out Form \(ARM-18\)](#) to the Records Management Division at rm@scdah.sc.gov.
- Confidential and restricted records — Records officers and records custodians should ensure that confidential records are securely filed, accessed, and disposed of to prevent unauthorized access.
- Exceptions to minimum retention periods — This general schedule establishes minimum retention periods for the official copy of your agency’s records. Although most records can be destroyed when their minimum retentions have been met, you may need to keep some records longer to satisfy specific requirements, such as federal or state audits, legal purposes, litigation, fiscal purposes, and any other retention hold. Be sure those requirements have been met before you dispose of those records.
- Copies — This general schedule does not cover copies of records, which you may have made for convenience, information, or duplication. If you have duplicate copies of records in any format, you must deem one version as the official version to be covered by the retention schedule. You should destroy all other copies when they are no longer referenced or used. The destruction of copies does not need to be reported on the [Report on Records Destroyed Form \(ARM-11\)](#).
- Non-Records — This general schedule covers the official version of records, and certain materials do not need to be retained as records under the disposition requirements of this schedule. Such materials include: (1) catalogs, trade journals, and other publications received that do not require official action and do not document department activities; (2) stocks of blank stationery, blank forms, or other surplus materials that are not subject to audit and have become obsolete; (3) transitory records, depending on the context, which are temporary records created for short-term internal purposes that may include, but are not limited to: a) routing slips; voicemail and phone messages; b) miscellaneous notices or memoranda; c) information received as part of a distribution list or e-mail message received from listservs and other Internet sources, solely for reference; d) preliminary drafts of letters, memoranda, or reports, and other informal materials that do not record decisions; e) documents that are superseded or updated (may not include official records, newsletters, etc.); f) unsolicited advertising materials; g) information in a form used for casual communication of a transitory nature; h) general correspondence pertaining to

scheduling a event with no long-term value. These kinds of materials may be disposed of when no longer needed for reference and without documentation of destruction.

- **Format** — This general schedule covers records based on their informational content rather than the medium in which they are stored. Born-digital records refer to materials that are created in an electronic format, such as a Word or Excel document. Digitized records are those created in paper format that are converted into a digital format and stored electronically, such as a PDF document. To convert paper records to digital format, you must complete and submit an [Authorization for Disposal of Original Paper Records Stored as Digital Images Form \(ARM-13\)](#) to the Records Management Division at rm@scdah.sc.gov. This form will designate the electronic copy as the official version of the record. Electronic records with long-term (10 years or more) or permanent retention, must have a secure off-site back-up. Microfilm may be substituted for the original records if the microfilm meets the state standards in regulations as outlined in Chapter 12, Article 200 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended. To convert paper records to microfilm, you must complete and submit a [Microfilm Quality Certification for Records Disposition Form \(ARM-12\)](#). Permanent microfilmed records must have a duplicate security copy stored in a separate location. These forms are located at <https://scdah.sc.gov/records-management/forms>.
- **Social media and email programs** — These are platforms used to convey information. The information produced or shared within the platforms by a public body is considered a record. The retention of the records contained on these platforms is based on the informational content and may be covered under several retention schedules. There is no single retention period for email. The retention of email is based on the informational content and the organizational position of the author. Social Media is addressed in the State Administrative General Retention Schedule as well as under the Administrative subarticle for state colleges and universities and local governments.
- **Ownership of official records** — This general schedule covers records created, owned, and in the possession of agencies. Records stored in non-agency-administered databases may not be the official version of the record covered by the general schedule. Records stored in other databases not managed by the agency, such as federal databases where state and/or local entities input data, are not considered the official version of the record. Agencies should also store these records in an agency-managed server or database where the accessibility, retention, and destruction of the official version is managed by the agency.

Contacting the Records Management Division

For any questions regarding the use of these general schedules or to arrange a records management training session, please contact the Records Management Division at 803-896-6128 or rm@scdah.sc.gov.

Subarticle 1: Computer Operations and Technical Support

DP-1-01. Audit Trails Files

A. Description: A collection of data documenting the monitoring of system use and activities to ensure the integrity and reliability of data, and to determine system user needs. The data includes log-on and log-off records; capture, edit, and deletion dates; and related audit fields established during the construction of master files or databases.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-02. Automated Tape Library System Files

A. Description: An automated records system or library that is fully controlled automatically using robotic tape cartridge handlers to maintain the tape library control records. Information includes the location, maintenance, and disposition of magnetic tape cassettes or cartridges.

B. Retention: Until after related records or media are destroyed or withdrawn from the tape library; destroy.

DP-1-03. Computer Usage Files

A. Description: Used to monitor computer system usage. Information includes electronic files or automated logs, log-in files, system usage files, data entry logs, summary computer usage reports, audit trail files, valid transaction files, and records of individual and network computer program usage.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-04. Computer Run Scheduling Records

A. Description: Used to schedule computer runs. Information includes daily schedules, run reports, run requests, and other records documenting the successful completion of a run.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-05. Data Processing Hardware Documentation

A. Description: Documents the use, operation, and maintenance of an agency's data processing equipment. Information includes operating manuals, hardware/operating system requirements, hardware configurations, and equipment control systems.

B. Retention: Until superseded or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-06. Data Processing Operating Procedures

A. Description: Documentation consists of procedures for data entry, operation of computer equipment, production control, tape library, system back-up, and other aspects of data processing operation.

B. Retention: 3 years after policy withdrawn, revised, updated, or superseded; destroy.

DP-1-07. Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plans

A. Description: Documents the protection and re-establishment of data processing services and equipment in case of a disaster. Information includes procedures, checklists, and emergency phone numbers and addresses.

B. Retention: Until superseded by revised plan; destroy.

DP-1-08. Finding Aids (or Indexes)

A. Description: Used to facilitate the search and/or retrieval of electronic information/records. Information includes indexes, lists, registers, and other finding aids.

B. Retention:

- (1) Finding aids related to non-permanent record series: Until no longer needed for reference or when related records are destroyed, whichever is later; destroy.
- (2) Finding aids related to permanent record series:
 - (a) Agency: Until no longer needed for reference.
 - (b) State Archives, College/University Archives, or local government repository: Permanent.

DP-1-09. Input/Source Documents

A. Description: Used solely as input for a master file or database. Also used to create, update, or modify the records in an electronic medium and not required for audit and legal purposes. Information includes non-electronic documents and/or forms as well as uncalibrated and invalidated digital or analog data collected during observation or measurement activities.

B. Retention: Until the information has been converted to an electronic medium, or when no longer needed to support the reconstruction of the master file, whichever is later; destroy.

DP-1-10. Operating System and Hardware Conversion Plans

A. Description: Used for the replacement of equipment or computer operating systems due to hardware/software obsolescence or maintenance and part of regular migration/conversion schedule built into the design of the system.

B. Retention: 1 year after successful conversion; destroy.

DP-1-11. Print Files

A. Description: Used to produce hard copy publications and/or printouts of tabulations, ledgers, registers, and reports. Information includes unaltered files extracted from a master file or database.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-12. System Back-up File

A. Description: Electronic file maintained to back-up the master file or database in case the master file or database is damaged or inadvertently erased. Information consists of data identical in physical format to a master file or database.

B. Retention: 3 database/master file back-up cycles; destroy.

DP-1-13. System Users Access Records

A. Description: Used by system administrators to control or monitor users' access. Information includes user account records, security logs, and password files.

B. Retention: Until updated, superseded, or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-14. Summary Computer Usage Reports

A. Description: Summary reports and other records created to document computer and network usage for reporting or cost recovery purposes.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-15. Summary of Extracted Data Files

A. Description: Used to distribute data to individuals or program units for reference and use. Information consists of summary of aggregate data from a master file or database.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-16. Tape Library Control Records

A. Description: A collection of records used to control the location, maintenance, and disposition of electronic media in an off-line tape storage library, which includes lists of holdings and control logs, and "scratch reports" regarding the destruction of tape library electronic files. These records may exist in paper or electronic form.

B. Retention: Until updated, superseded, or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-1-17. Valid Transaction Files

A. Description: Information of a record being used to update and/or document a transaction in a database or master file and not retained to document a program unit action. This transaction occurs within transaction files, Database Management System (DBMS) Log, update files, and similar records.

B. Retention: Retain until completion of third update or back-up cycle of transaction target file for systems that are updated cyclically; destroy.

DP-1-18. Work/Intermediate Files

A. Description: A collection of files that are temporarily retained to facilitate the processing of specific job/runs or to create, update, modify, transfer, export, import, manipulate, or sort data within an automated system. May include “macro” or “startup” files or other electronic records created to preserve a combination of data elements and/or method of displaying these data elements, when all transactions are captured in a master file, valid transaction file or database.

B. Retention: Retain file until transaction is completed or until no longer required for valid transaction; destroy.

Subarticle 2: Data Administration

DP-2-01. Data/Database Dictionary Reports

A. Description: Periodic printouts from a data/database directory system. Information includes data element attribute reports, database scheme, and related records used for reference purposes.

B. Retention: Until superseded or no longer for reference; destroy.

Subarticle 3: General Administration

DP-3-01. Data Processing Policies

A. Description: Documentation that provides general information on access and security, systems development, data retention and disposition, and data ownership.

B. Retention: 3 years after policy withdrawn, revised, updated, or superseded; destroy.

DP-3-02. Data Processing Product/Vendor and State Contracts Reference Files

A. Description: Records created and used to present information on equipment, software, and other products developed or purchased through the state or vendor. Information includes the name of company/vendor, description of product(s), special requirements, service requirements, and other related information.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-3-03. Data Processing Subject Files

A. Description: Used to support the administration of agency data processing services. Information includes correspondence, memoranda, reports, and reference publications.

B. Retention: Until superseded or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-3-04. Information Technology and Data Processing Services Plans

A. Description: Prepared by state agencies, colleges, and universities outlining their anticipated needs for information technology. Plans include executive summary, application, technical (equipment) needs and descriptions, training requirements, service specifications, budget summary, technology purchase requests, and other related information. The plans are submitted on an annual basis and when approved provide agencies and institutions with authority to request the procurement of information technology systems. The record version of this series is scheduled to be retained permanently by the Department of Archives and History through the Department of Administration's Program Management Office.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-3-05. Records of Chargebacks to Data Processing Services Users

A. Description: Used to document and calculate costs, and bill program units for computer usage and data processing services. These records are also used for cost recovery, budgeting, or administrative purposes.

B. Retention: 3 years; destroy.

Subarticle 4: Internet Services

DP-4-01. Agency Internet Service Logs

A. Description: Electronic files, logs, or other records created to monitor access and use of agency services provided via the Internet, including, but not limited to, services provided via File Transfer Protocol (FTP), website, or agency Telnet services.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-4-02. Employee Internet Use Logs

A. Description: Collection of electronic files or automated logs created to monitor and control use of the Internet by agency employees. These records may include an agency's gopher site, File Transfer Protocol (FTP), World Wide Web site, or via agency Telnet services.

B. Retention: Until review and verification, and until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

Subarticle 5: Network/Data Communication Services

DP-5-01. Inventories of Network Circuits/Connections

A. Description: Records used to document network circuits used by the agency. Information includes circuit number, vendor, cost per month, type of connection, terminal series, software, contact person, and other relevant information about the circuit.

B. Retention: Until updated, superseded, or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-5-02. Network Implementation Project Files

A. Description: Records used to plan and merge a network and may include reports, justifications, working diagrams of proposed network, wiring schematics, and diagrams.

B. Retention: Until superseded or after relevant audit requirement met; destroy.

DP-5-03. Network or Circuit Installation and Service Files

A. Description: Requests for data communication service, installation, or repair and response to the request. Records include work orders, correspondence, memoranda, work schedules, copies of building or circuitry diagrams, and non-official copies of fiscal documents.

B. Retention: 3 years after request is filled or repairs are made; destroy.

DP-5-04. Network Site/Equipment Support Files

A. Description: Used to document support services provided to specific sites and computer-to-computer interfaces on a network. Information includes site visit reports, trouble reports, service histories, and related correspondence.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

Subarticle 6: Systems and Application Development

DP-6-01. Application Development Project Files

A. Description: Records created and used on the development, redesign, or modification of an automated system or application. Documentation includes draft system or subsystem specifications; draft user requirements and specifications; and memoranda and correspondence.

B. Retention: 3 years after completion of project and no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-6-02. Automated Program Listing/Source Code

A. Description: Program code which generates the machine language instructions used to operate an automated system.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-6-03. Computer System Test Files

A. Description: Records used to test system or program performance, as well as related printouts and documentation.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-6-04. Quality Assurance Records

A. Description: Information verifying the quality of system, hardware, or software operations including records of errors or failures and the loss of data resulting from such failures; documentation of abnormal termination and of error-free processing; checks of changes put into production; transaction histories; and other records needed as an audit trail to evaluate data accuracy.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-6-05. System Documentation (Non-Permanent Systems)

A. Description: Used to plan, develop, operate, and maintain electronic records and software. Information includes data systems specifications, file specifications, code books, records layouts, user guides, output specifications, system instructions, tutorials, reference guides, final reports, and other related documentation.

B. Retention: Until superseded, updated, or no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-6-06. Technical Program Documentation

A. Description: Information examining program codes, program flowcharts, program maintenance log, system change notices, and other records that document modifications to computer programs.

B. Retention: 1 year after modification or after related programs cease to be used; destroy.

DP-6-07. Technical Reformat Files

A. Description: Used to document information interchange of master files or databases. Information includes electronic files written with varying technical specifications consisting of data copied from a master file or database.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

Subarticle 7: User and Office Automation Support

DP-7-01. Hardware and Software Review Files

A. Description: Records used to detail hardware and software usage within an agency. Documents include vendor information, manuals, software reviews, and related material.

B. Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-7-02. Help Desk Telephone Logs and Reports

Description: Records used to document information relating to technical assistance and responses to requests for the purpose of collecting information on the use of computer equipment for program delivery, security, or other purposes.

Retention: Until no longer needed for reference; destroy.

DP-7-03. Site/Equipment Support Files

Description: Records used for support services provided to specific computer equipment or installations, including site visit reports, program and equipment service reports, service histories, correspondence and memoranda.

Retention:

- (1) Service histories and other summary records: After the related equipment is no longer in use; destroy.
- (2) All other records: 3 years; destroy.