

SOP: Digital versus Paper Record Management Guidelines

This SOP establishes **digital versus paper record management guidelines** to ensure efficient, secure, and compliant handling of organizational records. It covers criteria for selecting digital or paper formats, storage and retrieval procedures, data backup and security measures, access control, and retention policies. The objective is to optimize record-keeping practices by leveraging technology while maintaining the integrity and accessibility of important documents.

1. Purpose

Define the methodologies for managing records in digital and paper formats to ensure compliance, security, and accessibility while optimizing efficiency.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, contractors, and departments handling records within the organization.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Records Manager:** Oversees implementation, compliance, and periodic review of these guidelines.
- **Department Heads:** Ensure adherence within teams; identify records requiring specific formats.
- **All Employees:** Comply with the appropriate guidelines for record creation, storage, and handling.

4. Record Format Selection Criteria

Consideration	Digital Format	Paper Format
Legal/Regulatory Requirement	If permitted by law/regulation	If mandatory by law/regulation
Frequency of Access	High access; multiple users	Infrequent; single or limited users
Data Sensitivity	Secured by encryption/access controls	Physically secured; limited handling
Volume of Records	High; easier to store/search	Low; not space-consuming
Signature/Originality Requirement	Supports qualified digital signatures	Requires wet-ink signature/original document

5. Storage and Retrieval Procedures

5.1 Digital Records

- Store in secure, access-controlled electronic document management systems (EDMS).
- Ensure proper file naming conventions and metadata tagging for easy retrieval.
- Implement regular data backups and system integrity checks.

5.2 Paper Records

- Store in locked, organized filing systems in secure, access-controlled areas.
- Maintain a log or index for efficient retrieval and tracking.
- Limit duplication and ensure authorized access only.

6. Data Backup and Security Measures

- Digital data must be backed up regularly to secure, redundant locations.
- Encryption and password policies must be enforced for sensitive files.
- Paper records require secure storage facilities with environmental and disaster protection.

7. Access Control

- Grant access to digital records based on job roles via authenticated logins.
- Paper record access is restricted to authorized personnel; maintain a sign-in/out sheet.
- Both formats should be reviewed periodically to adjust access rights as necessary.

8. Retention and Disposal

- Follow organizational retention schedules in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
- Digital records: utilize secure deletion methods for disposal.
- Paper records: destroy via shredding or approved disposal methods.
- Record disposal should be documented and approved by the Records Manager.

9. Review and Revision

- Review this SOP annually or as regulations/technology evolve.
- Document and communicate any revisions to all staff.

Appendix

- Record Retention Schedule Template
- Sample File Naming Conventions
- Incident Reporting Form