SOP: Secure Storage and Handling of Physical Records

This SOP provides guidelines for the **secure storage and handling of physical records**, ensuring their protection from unauthorized access, damage, loss, and theft. It covers proper filing systems, access control measures, environmental conditions for storage, handling procedures, retention schedules, and disposal methods. The objective is to maintain the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of important physical documents throughout their lifecycle.

1. Purpose

To establish procedures for the secure storage, handling, retention, and disposal of physical records to prevent unauthorized access, loss, or damage.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees and contractors who handle, store, or manage physical records within the organization.

3. Definitions

- **Physical Records**: Any non-digital documents, papers, files, or forms containing organizational information.
- **Authorized Personnel**: Individuals granted specific permission to access, handle, or manage physical records.

4. Responsibilities

- All employees are responsible for following this SOP and reporting any security breaches.
- Records managers ensure that storage areas and procedures comply with this SOP.
- Supervisors oversee employee compliance and provide necessary training.

5. Procedure

5.1 Filing and Organization

1. Organize records using a standardized filing system with clearly labeled folders and cabinets.
2. Maintain an inventory or log of stored records for easy retrieval and tracking.

5.2 Access Control

1. Store records in lockable cabinets or secure rooms with restricted access.
2. Issue keys or access cards only to authorized personnel. Log all issuances and returns.
3. Periodically review access rights and revoke those no longer required.

5.3 Environmental Controls

1. Maintain storage areas at recommended temperature and humidity levels (as appropriate for record type).
2. Install fire prevention/detection and water damage mitigation systems.
3. Protect records from sunlight, pests, and contaminants.

5.4 Handling Procedures

1. Handle records with clean hands and avoid food or drinks near them.
2. Do not remove records from secure areas without proper authorization and check-out procedure.
3. Return files to their proper place immediately after use.

5.5 Retention and Disposal

1. Follow the organization's records retention schedule, retaining records for the legally required or operational period.
2. Segregate records due for disposal and document the destruction authorization process.
3. Destroy records using secure methods (e.g., shredding, incineration) ensuring data is irrecoverable.
4. Maintain disposal records, including date, method, and personnel involved.

6. Training

All personnel involved in handling physical records must receive training on secure handling practices and this SOP.

7. Review and Update

This SOP shall be reviewed annually or when changes in laws, regulations, or organizational needs occur.

8. References

- Organization's Records Management Policy
- Applicable legal or regulatory requirements

9. Revision History

Date	Version	Description of Change	Author
[YYYY-MM-DD]	1.0	Initial version	[Author]