

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Document Handling, Filing, and Records Retention Procedures

This SOP details the **document handling, filing, and records retention procedures** to ensure organized, secure, and efficient management of all company documents. It covers the processes for proper document creation, systematic filing and indexing, secure storage methods, retention schedules based on legal and operational requirements, and the authorized disposal of records. The goal is to maintain document integrity, facilitate easy retrieval, and comply with regulatory standards.

1. Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for document handling, filing, storage, retention, and disposal that protect sensitive information and ensure regulatory compliance.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all physical and electronic documents generated, received, processed, and stored by the company.

3. Responsibilities

- **All Employees:** Adhere to document handling and filing procedures.
- **Department Heads:** Ensure staff compliance and periodic review of records.
- **Records Management Officer:** Oversee records organization, storage, and disposal.
- **IT Department:** Manage electronic records backup and security.

4. Procedures

- Document Creation & Review**
 - Ensure all documents contain accurate and necessary information.
 - Assign document titles, reference numbers, and applicable revision dates.
 - Review and approve documents prior to filing.
- Filing and Indexing**
 - Use standardized naming conventions and indexing for easy retrieval.
 - File documents promptly in designated folders (physical or electronic) within two business days of creation or receipt.
 - Record metadata (date, document type, owner, retention period) in the document repository.
- Storage**
 - Store physical documents in secure, access-restricted filing cabinets or rooms.
 - Back up electronic records regularly and store in protected, access-controlled systems.
 - Limit access to authorized personnel only.
- Records Retention**
 - Maintain records according to the prescribed retention schedule (see Section 5).
 - Review records annually to ensure compliance with retention requirements.
- Disposal of Records**
 - Dispose of records after the retention period, following approval by the Records Management Officer.
 - Use secure disposal methods (shredding, deletion from electronic systems, etc.).
 - Document disposal in the records destruction log.

5. Records Retention Schedule (Sample)

Document Type	Retention Period	Responsible Department
Financial Records	7 years	Finance
Employee Records	6 years after termination	HR
Contracts/Agreements	6 years after expiry	Legal
General Correspondence	3 years	All Departments
Customer Records	5 years	Sales/Support

(Note: Adapt retention periods based on local legal and regulatory requirements.)

6. Compliance and Review

- All employees must be trained on this SOP upon onboarding and at least annually thereafter.
- The Records Management Officer, in conjunction with Legal, will review this SOP annually and update as needed.
- Non-compliance may result in disciplinary action per company policy.

7. References

- Company Records Management Policy
- Applicable national and international data protection laws
- Industry-specific regulations