

# SOP Template: Record Retention Schedules and Disposal Methods

This SOP defines **record retention schedules and disposal methods** to ensure compliance with legal, regulatory, and organizational requirements. It outlines the systematic approach for retaining records for specified periods, securely storing them, and properly disposing of them when retention periods expire. The purpose is to safeguard important information, maintain data integrity, and minimize risks associated with improper record handling while optimizing storage space and ensuring confidentiality during disposal.

## 1. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, contractors, and departments responsible for creating, storing, and disposing of company records, both physical and electronic.

## 2. Responsibilities

- **Records Manager:** Oversee record retention and disposal processes.
- **Department Heads:** Ensure department compliance with retention schedules.
- **All Employees:** Adhere to record handling and retention procedures.

## 3. Record Retention Schedule

Record Type	Retention Period	Authority/Reference
Financial Records	7 years	IRS Regulations
Employee Records	6 years after separation	HR Policy/Legal
Contracts/Agreements	7 years after expiry	Company Policy
Client Files	5 years after project completion	Industry Standards
Email Correspondence	2 years	Company IT Policy

## 4. Storage Methods

- Physical records: Stored in secure, access-controlled cabinets/rooms.
- Electronic records: Stored on encrypted servers or approved cloud solutions with regular backups.

## 5. Disposal Methods

- **Paper Records:**
  - Shred documents using cross-cut shredders.
  - Use certified confidential document destruction services.
- **Electronic Records:**
  - Permanently delete files from systems and backup storage.
  - Wipe and degauss hard drives before physical destruction or recycling.
  - Obtain destruction certificates from third-party vendors when applicable.

## 6. Procedure

1. Identify records due for disposal based on the retention schedule.
2. Review records to confirm eligibility for destruction; secure necessary approvals.
3. Document records selected for disposal (include type, date, method).
4. Dispose of records using approved methods to ensure confidentiality.
5. Maintain disposal documentation and destruction certificates.

## **7. Compliance and Review**

- Regularly audit record retention and disposal practices for compliance.
- Update retention schedules as laws and regulations change.
- Provide periodic training for staff involved in record handling.

## **8. References**

- Applicable federal and state regulations
- Industry standards and best practices
- Internal company policies