

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Archiving and Retention Schedules

This SOP details the **archiving and retention schedules** essential for managing organizational records efficiently. It outlines the procedures for classifying, storing, and preserving documents and data to ensure compliance with legal requirements and internal policies. The schedule specifies retention periods for different types of records, the criteria for archiving or disposal, and responsibilities for maintaining the integrity and accessibility of archived information. Proper implementation of these schedules supports operational continuity, legal compliance, and effective information governance.

1. Purpose

To ensure organizational records are archived and retained in compliance with applicable laws and policies, maintaining operational efficiency and information integrity.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all organizational records, irrespective of format, including but not limited to paper documents, electronic files, emails, and databases.

3. Responsibilities

- **Records Manager:** Oversees implementation, training, and compliance with retention schedules.
- **Department Heads:** Ensure departmental adherence to the SOP.
- **All Staff:** Properly classify and handle documents per the retention schedule.

4. Archiving Procedures

1. **Classification:** Identify and categorize records according to type and sensitivity.
2. **Storage:** Store records in secure, accessible locations (physical or digital).
3. **Indexing:** Maintain catalogs or logs for easy retrieval and tracking.
4. **Access Control:** Limit access to authorized personnel only.

5. Retention Schedules

| Record Type | Retention Period | Archiving Action | Disposal Criteria |
|--|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Financial Records | 7 Years | Archive after 1 year | Shred/delete after retention |
| Human Resources Files | 7 Years after termination | Archive after employee leaves | Shred/delete after retention |
| Contracts & Agreements | 7 Years after expiration | Archive upon execution | Shred/delete after retention |
| Email Correspondence (Business-critical) | 3 Years | Archive monthly | Delete after retention |
| Project Documents | 5 Years after project close | Archive upon completion | Delete after retention |

6. Review and Disposal Process

1. Conduct annual reviews to identify records eligible for disposal.
2. Obtain required approvals before destruction.
3. Ensure secure disposal through shredding (physical) or permanent deletion (digital).
4. Maintain a log documenting disposed records and actions taken.

7. Compliance and Auditing

Periodic audits will be conducted to ensure adherence to this SOP and identify areas for improvement. Non-compliance may result in disciplinary measures.

8. Review Cycle

This SOP and retention schedule shall be reviewed annually or upon significant regulatory or policy changes.