

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Record Retention and Disposal Policies

This SOP details the **record retention and disposal policies**, including the classification of records, retention periods, secure storage methods, procedures for reviewing records, authorized disposal methods, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and responsibilities for managing records throughout their lifecycle to ensure confidentiality, integrity, and accessibility.

1. Purpose

To establish guidelines for the retention, protection, and disposal of records in accordance with legal, regulatory, and organizational requirements.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, departments, and third parties who create, receive, or handle records on behalf of [Organization Name].

3. Definitions

- **Record:** Any information, regardless of format (physical or electronic), created, received, and maintained as evidence and for operational purposes.
- **Retention Period:** The length of time a record must be kept before disposal.
- **Disposal:** The authorized destruction or permanent removal of records.

4. Responsibilities

- **Records Manager:** Oversees implementation of this SOP and ensures compliance.
- **Department Heads:** Ensure all staff adhere to SOP requirements.
- **All Employees:** Maintain records in accordance with this SOP.

5. Classification of Records

Record Type	Classification	Example
Personnel Records	Confidential	Employee files, payroll records
Financial Records	Restricted	Invoices, tax returns
Administrative Records	Internal	Meeting minutes, policies
Public Records	Public	Press releases

6. Retention Periods

Record Type	Retention Period	Authority
Personnel Records	7 years after termination	Legal/regulatory
Financial Records	7 years	Accounting standards
Administrative Records	5 years	Internal policy
Public Records	Indefinite	Organizational policy

* See Appendix A for complete retention schedule.

7. Secure Storage Methods

- Physical records: Stored in secured, access-controlled locations (e.g., locked cabinets, archives).
- Electronic records: Protected by encryption, passwords, regular backups, and access controls.

8. Review and Disposal Procedures

1. Records Manager provides quarterly lists of records due for review/disposal.
2. Relevant department reviews records for continuing business or legal need.
3. Upon approval, records are disposed of via authorized methods.
4. Disposal must be documented using the Record Disposal Form (see Appendix B).

9. Authorized Disposal Methods

- Paper records: Shredding or incineration.
- Electronic records: Secure erase, degaussing, or destruction of storage media.
- **Note:** Records containing personal or sensitive data must use methods that ensure irrecoverable destruction.

10. Compliance and Audit

- All records must be managed in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and standards (e.g., GDPR, HIPAA, SOX).
- Annual audits will be conducted to confirm compliance with this SOP.

11. Revision and Training

- This SOP shall be reviewed and updated annually or as required by regulatory changes.
- Relevant employees must receive training on record retention and disposal at onboarding and as policies are updated.

Appendices

- **Appendix A:** Detailed Record Retention Schedule
- **Appendix B:** Record Disposal Form Template