Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)

Step-by-Step Physical Document Filing Process

This SOP details the **step-by-step physical document filing process**, covering document categorization, labeling, indexing, filing methods, storage protocols, retrieval procedures, and regular maintenance. The objective is to ensure efficient organization, easy accessibility, and secure management of physical records to support operational effectiveness and compliance.

1. Document Categorization

1. Collect documents to be filed.
2. Review and group documents by type, department, or function (e.g., financial, HR, legal, correspondence).
3. Separate confidential or sensitive documents as needed for secure handling.

2. Labeling

1. Assign a unique identifier (code, reference number, or title) to each document or folder.
2. Clearly label files, folders, or document binders with:
   - Document title/description
   - Unique identifier
   - Date or date range
   - Department/owner (if applicable)
3. Use standardized labels and writing tools for consistency.

3. Indexing

1. Log each document in a physical records index (logbook or spreadsheet), including:
   - Document title/description
   - Identifier
   - Date filed
   - Filing location (cabinet/drawer/shelf)
   - Responsible person
2. Update the index immediately upon filing new documents or retrieving existing ones.

4. Filing Methods

1. Sort documents by the chosen filing system (alphabetical, numerical, chronological, or subject-based).
2. Place each document in an appropriately labeled folder within filing cabinets, drawers, or boxes.
3. Arrange files in a consistent and standardized order for easy access.
4. If required, use separators or color-coded tabs for further organization.

5. Storage Protocols

1. Store documents in secure, designated filing areas (e.g., locked cabinets or rooms for sensitive items).
2. Maintain environmental controls as needed (e.g., protection from moisture, fire, dust, and pests).
3. Ensure that only authorized personnel have access to restricted or confidential files.

6. Retrieval Procedure

1. Consult the physical records index to locate documents by their identifier or description.
2. Remove files carefully, ensuring all tracking and sign-out procedures are followed.
3. Record the retrieval in the index (date, name of individual retrieving the document, expected return date).
4. Return and re-file documents promptly after use, updating the index accordingly.

7. Regular Maintenance

1. Conduct periodic audits (at least annually) to:
   - Ensure files are correctly labeled, indexed, and organized.

- Remove or archive outdated or obsolete documents per retention policies.
2. Check for physical damage or environmental threats and address them immediately.
3. Update filing protocols and staff training as needed.

8. Compliance and Security

1. Comply with all relevant internal policies and legal/regulatory requirements for document handling and retention.
2. Ensure all access, retrieval, and disposal actions are logged and monitored.
3. Immediately report lost, misplaced, or damaged documents to the responsible authority.

Reviewed by: _____ **Date:** _____

Next Review Due: _____