

APPENDIX C
Policy #403
TRANSITORY RECORDS

Definition of Transitory Record:

Transitory records are records such as memos, letters, reports, computer files, voice or e-mail messages, etc. that you create or receive while doing your job that have only short-term, immediate or no future value to the municipality.

Transitory records can legally and routinely be destroyed.

There are no firm rules as to what is and is not a transitory record. The decision will be based on the judgment of each employee.

If the information in a record will have some future administrative, financial, legal, research or historical value to the municipality then it is not transitory and should be filed. For example, e-mail messages that record approvals, recommendations, opinions, decisions or government business transactions have future value and are not transitory.

Categories of Transitory Records:

Temporary Information

This includes telephone messages, routing slips, post-it notes, opened envelopes, memos, notes and messages (either paper, voice, or electronic) where the information has only immediate or very short-term value. Once they have been used to perform the required activities, the records have no further value.

On occasion, records such as these must be kept. Envelopes might be kept because the time and date of receipt are stamped on them. A telephone message slip may have to be filed as it provides evidence of an individual calling at a certain time and date. If there is any doubt as to whether recorded information will have any future reference value, file the record.

Duplicates

This includes exact reproductions of a master document. Common examples are photocopies, or extra copies printed from a computer system or by a commercial printer. After the master version has been filed, the duplicate may be destroyed. Clearly identify duplicates that are circulated strictly for reference purposes, so they are not filed.

A duplicate can sometimes be altered by someone adding handwritten comments, notes, or initials to it. This action creates a new record. If this added information will have future value to the municipality, file the document.

Draft Documents and Working Material

This includes source material used in the preparation of documents and earlier versions of final documents. Usually, drafts and working materials, whether paper or electronic, do not have long-term value and can be destroyed as transitory records.

Publications

This includes books, magazines, periodicals, pamphlets, brochures, journals, newspapers and software documentation obtained from sources outside the municipality. If they have no future value and their usefulness is finished, they can be discarded in accordance with the library's guidelines.

Master copies of publications produced by or for the municipality are not transitory and should be filed. Extra copies are transitory once the publication is obsolete and may be destroyed. If it is believed that an obsolete publication has some historical significance, the Provincial Archives of Alberta or the local Archives may be contacted.

Direct Mail

This includes solicited or unsolicited information received from organizations or individuals advertising their products or services. If it is directly relevant to the operation of the library, this material may be filed for future reference. The vast majority of these types of documents are “junk mail” and can routinely be destroyed.

Blank Information Media

This includes anything that was created or acquired for the purpose of collection or storing information but which has not been used and has become obsolete. For example, blank forms can be destroyed.

This category can be used when storage media information must be physically destroyed as in the case of videos, audio or dictation tapes, diskettes, magnetic tapes, disk drives, or optical disks. Items can be physically destroyed if certain criteria apply:

- where sensitive or confidential information was previously stored
- where that information was erased according to an approved records retention and disposition schedule
- where it is possible that someone could recover the erased information by technical means

Process for Disposing Transitory Records

Disposal of transitory records depends on two factors:

- Whether or not the records are confidential
- The physical format or medium of the records

Confidentiality

Many transitory records do not contain confidential information, but some include personal information about individuals, third-party business information, cabinet confidences, or other sensitive information. Section 15-28 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act provides guidance on what could be considered sensitive or confidential.

Obsolete blank forms that could be misused should be treated as confidential transitory records. One example is purchase orders.

Physical Format

The two most common record formats are paper and electronic media. Paper records can be recycled, pulped or shredded. Records on electronic media can be deleted through a specific action or erased automatically after a specified period of time.

Information obtained from Alberta Public Works, Supply and Services:
“A Guide to Identifying and Disposing of Transitory Records” brochure.