

SOUND CITIES ASSOCIATION RECORDS RETENTION POLICY

1. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

Washington state law requires that all agencies appropriately retain, store, archive, and dispose of all public records in accordance with schedules approved by the state records committee after the records no longer serve an active business purpose. Chapter 40.14 RCW.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that the Sound Cities Association (“SCA”) complies with Washington’s records retention laws. Except where the procedures are mandated by statute, the procedures in this policy are discretionary and advisory only and shall not impose any affirmative duty on SCA. SCA reserves the right to apply and interpret this policy within its sole discretion and to revise or change the policy at any time.

This policy shall be available at SCA’s main office and posted on SCA’s website.

2. SCOPE

It is the policy of the Sound Cities Association that all employees review and familiarize themselves with this policy and the established records retention schedule for local governments.

For the purposes of this Policy, “public records” means both records that SCA creates and records that SCA receives or collects in connection with the transaction of public business. For example, when SCA solicits public comment on an issue, both the request for comment and any comments received in response are public records.

Public records may be physical or electronic, including paper records, photographs, microfilm, emails, websites, blogs, digital photos, text messages, tweets, and any emerging technologies used to conduct agency business.

Some public records have high retention value and must be stored for several years according to their retention periods. Other public records have short-term or no retention value. Records that do not fall under the definition of “public record” have no retention value and have no retention period.

SCA shall retain, store, archive, and dispose of all public records according to their retention periods, as outlined in the [Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule \(CORE Schedule\)](http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/UsingtheLocalGovernmentCommonRecordsRetentionScheduleCORE.aspx), available at <http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/RecordsManagement/UsingtheLocalGovernmentCommonRecordsRetentionScheduleCORE.aspx>.

This policy is secondary to any current public records requests for specific public records and any legal hold notices for records in response to potential litigation. Sensitive and confidential data must be protected from disclosure in accordance with applicable federal and state law.

3. RETENTION PROCEDURES

3.1 Instructions for Processing Printed and Hard Copy Documents

At least once each biennium, SCA staff shall inventory, or manage and inventory, public records that no longer serve an active business purpose using the following procedures:

- a. Determine the record's retention period under the CORE Schedule (see above);
- b. Securely dispose of records with no retention period;
- c. If the record has a retention period, store that record in an easily identifiable location that indicates the record's retention period start date and retention period; and,
- d. Dispose of records retained beyond their retention period.

3.2 Instructions for Processing Electronic Records

SCA staff shall identify, schedule, and process all electronic public records under the same procedures as those for printed and hard copy documents.

3.3 Instructions for General E-mail Management

E-mail communications used as a means of conducting official business may be subject to public records disclosure and may carry legally mandated retention requirements before being destroyed, deleted, or erased. Some e-mail messages may be transitory in nature and have no retention value. Others may contain brief notes, may be formal and substantive documents, and may also have separate attachments, all of which may need to be appropriately processed.

An e-mail's content (including its text, attachments, and associated metadata) determines how that email is processed.

3.3.1 E-mail Destruction

SCA staff shall delete transitory e-mail messages and those other e-mail messages that have no administrative, legal, fiscal, or archival requirements for retention as soon as those e-mail messages have served their purposes. Types of e-mail that typically have no retention value and may be destroyed when no longer needed include, but are not limited to:

- a. Transitory administrative records, such as:
 - (i) Miscellaneous notices or memoranda unrelated to the functional responsibility of the agency (e.g., traffic advisories, notices of community affairs, holidays, etc.);
 - (ii) Personal messages and announcements unrelated to official business (though these types of e-mail may contain evidence or historical material, which then should be retained);
 - (iii) Preliminary drafts that do not represent significant basic steps in the preparation of record document(s);
 - (iv) Telephone messages, including voicemail and digital voice messages;

- (v) E-mails of transmittal that do not add any information to the transmitted materials; and
- (vi) Announcements of social events, such as retirement parties or celebrations;
- b. Information-only copies or extracts of documents distributed for convenience of reference;
- c. Published reference materials;
- d. General information received from other agencies, commercial firms, or private institutions that requires no action, including catalogs, reports, multi-media presentations, newsletters, and unsolicited information; and
- e. Copies of inter- or intra-agency memoranda, bulletins, or directions of a general information and non-continuing nature.

3.3.2 Email Storage

SCA staff shall index retained e-mail messages in an organized and consistent pattern reflecting the manner in which the records are used and referenced. Messages should be stored in a filing system that is logical and searchable.

The sender is responsible for retaining the primary record copy of e-mail within SCA. The recipient is responsible for retaining e-mails that originate outside of SCA.

4. STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

4.1 Executive Director

The Executive Director shall maintain and administer this policy, including drafting any updates and changes to these policies and procedures.

4.2 Public Records Officer

The Public Records Officer shall assist SCA staff in retaining, storing, archiving, and disposing of public records in accordance with this policy and applicable federal and state public records laws.

4.3 Data Users

All SCA staff who create data, information, or public records using SCA computers, networks, or systems shall follow this policy and these procedures.

SCA staff shall:

- a. Destroy all records at the end of their retention periods, as specified on the retention schedule;
- b. Protect records essential to SCA operations from damage or loss;
- c. Preserve the integrity and accessibility of public records for the duration of their retention periods; and

- d. Maintain the security of public records made accessible for public inspection and copying according to the provisions of the Public Records Act, Chapter 42.56 RCW.