

With the passage of [House Bill 153](#) by the 129th General Assembly some changes were made to RC-1, RC-2, and RC-3 procedures for forms dated **after September 29, 2011** by the local records commission.

The Ohio History Connection-LGRP will indicate on your Records Retention Schedule (RC-2) forms during the review process the records series which will require a Certificate of Records Disposal (RC-3) prior to disposal. We have a new RC-2 form with check-boxes for the Ohio History Connection-LGRP to mark.

Please include a brief description for each records series on your RC-2 forms so that we may more accurately determine which records series will require a RC-3 form. RC-3 forms will only be required for records series indicated by Ohio History Connection-LGRP on your RC-2 form. We suggest that your local records commission continues to document the disposal of *all* records series internally.

We also suggest that you retain the the records documenting the disposals *permanently*.

After a One-Time Disposal of Obsolete Records (RC-1) has been reviewed by the Ohio History Connection-LGRP and approved by the Auditor of State, you will no longer be required to send in an RC-3 prior to disposal.

## Local Government Records Frequently Asked Questions

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### **I was just put in charge of scheduling and disposition. Where do I start?**

First of all, do you have an approved retention schedule? If not, inventorying your records, and identifying what records your office, department, or government creates, will be your first step.

These steps provide a simple and efficient method for managing government records.

1. [Organize your Records Commission](#)
2. [Designate a Records Officer in Each Department](#)
3. [Conduct a Complete Records Inventory](#)
4. [Determine a Retention Period for Records Created by Each Department](#)
5. [Prepare Retention Schedules and Disposal Lists \(Forms RC-1, RC-2, and RC-3\)](#)
6. [Submit Schedules or Applications to Records Commission](#)
7. [Submit Schedules or Applications to the State Archives](#)
8. [Prepare a Certificate of Records Disposal](#)

9. [Dispose of Records in Accordance with Approved Schedules or Applications](#)

**10. Records Commission Should Maintain a Central File**

**What are these forms?**

Local government records may be destroyed or transferred only in accordance with sections [149.31](#), [149.351](#), [149.38](#) (counties), [149.39](#) (municipal corporations), [149.41](#) (school districts), [149.42](#) (townships), [149.411](#) (public libraries), and [149.412](#) ([Special Taxing Districts](#)) of the Ohio Revised Code. Such action involves the preparation of either a schedule of records retention and disposition (RC-2) or an application for one-time records disposal (RC-1).

**RC-1 forms are used for a One Time Disposal of Obsolete Records that are no longer created or maintained.** For example, during the Civil War your government might have issued bounties to soldiers. Since your government is no longer creating these records, there is no need to include them on a retention schedule (RC-2 form). However, if you wish to dispose of these records, it will still need to be documented and the RC-1 form is the appropriate form to use.

**RC-2 forms are the Retention Schedules and tell us how long each record series is going to be retained.** RC-1 and RC-2 forms are signed off first by the Records Commission, then submitted to the State Archives – once reviewed and signed by the State Archives, they are sent over to the Auditor of State's office for review and signature.

**An RC-3 form is a Certificate of Disposal for records identified on a RC-2 form.** These forms do not require the signature of the Records Commission. The certificate of records disposal serves as the official record of the disposition of the records. Compliance to Section [149.31](#) ORC is required so that improper disposal does not occur.

All of the forms can be found at [www.ohiohistory.org/lgrforms](http://www.ohiohistory.org/lgrforms).

**How do I fill out an RC-1 form?**

See the [Instructions- RC-1](#). In the local government entity field use the municipality, county, township, school, library, or special taxing district name (e.g. Perry Township) and the department or unit in the unit field (e.g. Police Department), if applicable. Include a beginning and end-date for the records, as well as a description. Spell out acronyms or explain terms that may not be universally known.

Schedule numbers can be expressed by a year and item numbering scheme for each records series being scheduled, for example, 16-1 and 16-2. Another option is to include a unique abbreviated identifier for each office, for example, Eng. [Engineer] 1, Eng. 2, etc. The numbering schema is your choice.

Make sure that the form is signed by the responsible official in Part A and the records commission chair in Section B, and that you have included contact information.

### **How do I fill out an RC-2 form?**

See the [Instructions- RC-2](#). In the local government entity field use the municipality, county, township, school, library, or special taxing district name (e.g. Perry Township) and the department or unit in the unit field, if applicable (e.g. Police Department). Do not include dates in your record series, unless the intention is to limit the record series to only those dates. Do include media types. Spell out acronyms or explain terms that may not be universally known. Well formulated descriptions help the State Archives to more accurately determine which records series will require a RC-3 form.

Schedule numbers can be expressed by a year and item numbering scheme for each records series being scheduled, for example, 16-1 and 16-2. Another option is to include a unique abbreviated identifier for each office, for example, Eng. [Engineer] 1, Eng. 2, etc. The numbering schema is your choice, and it will be used later on your Certificate of Records Disposal (RC-3).

Make sure that the form is signed by the responsible official in Part A and the records commission chair in Section B, and that you have included contact information.

## How do I fill out an RC-3 form?

See the [Instructions- RC-3](#). In the local government entity field use the municipality, county, township, school, library, or special taxing district name (e.g. Perry Township) and the department or unit in the unit field, if applicable (e.g. Police Department). Make sure that the form is signed by the responsible official and that you have included contact information.

The “Authorization of Disposal” columns refer to the RC-2 that is being used for the disposition of the records. In the column for “Date RC-2 was approved” include the date that the records commission signed the RC-2 that you are referring to (e.g. 5/24/2010), not the date that the RC-3 was approved. Also include the record series titles and schedule numbers from your RC-2. Only include a record series on your RC-3 if you plan on destroying or transferring records under it. If it is useful, you should also include any additional description to help with the review process. Don’t be vague with your date range (e.g. various, all) and include both beginning and end-dates. The proposed dates of destruction should be at least fifteen business days from your submission date.

## What is a records commission?

Local records commissions are mandated and governed by Ohio Revised Code sections: [149.38](#) (counties), [149.39](#) (municipal corporations), [149.41](#) (school districts), [149.42](#) (townships), [149.411](#) (public libraries) and [149.412](#) ([Special Taxing Districts](#)). These sections require that county and municipal records commissions meet at least once every six months and that township, public library, school district, and special taxing district records commissions meet at least once every year. The members of each records commission are statutorily established so check Chapter 149 ORC and with your legal counsel. All records commission meetings are open public meetings subject to the provisions of [Section 121.22 ORC](#), Ohio’s Public Meetings law. Detailed commission minutes should be kept. Failure to comply with Section 121.22 ORC could lead to revocation of approvals and void the Records Commission actions.

## What is a Special Taxing District?

A special taxing district is a separate division of government that does not fit under the other forms of government. Special taxing districts may also have a tax levied to promote or achieve a public purpose. The term can be found described in section [149.412](#) of the Ohio Revised Code and this [2013 determination by the Ohio Attorney General](#).

### **What is a record officer?**

Each department should designate one person to be its records officer. The records officer will be responsible for all aspects of records retention and disposition within that department and serve as liaison with the records commission. A records officer has to have common sense, a willingness to learn and the ability to make a decision. Designate a person who take responsibility for the job and is familiar with all the duties and activities of the department and the records it creates and maintains.

### **What is a records inventory?**

An inventory of the entire record holdings of all offices and agencies is, ideally, the first step in creating a sound records program. Inventory all the department's records if possible, both physical and electronic. The purpose of the inventory is to locate, identify and describe the records series maintained by each office. A record series is defined as a sequence of records systematically classified and filed or as a group of records created for a specific activity or function. Some examples of records series are vouchers, receipts, minutes, or correspondence files. For each record series, the inventory should include the office of origin, location(s), information content, inclusive dates, quantity/size, frequency of use, and purpose.

Begin the records inventory in office areas, where the records are familiar to staff members. After the inventory of office records, those records in storage areas should be easier to identify. Note location not only by room, but also by storage unit (file cabinet, shelf, or box). A simple sketch of each room, giving the location of records storage units, eases this task. The completed inventory provides a ready guide to the locations of those records that need to be destroyed and those that should be retained, as well as identifying how records are being created and used.

## **What is the legal definition of a record?**

Section [149.011](#) of the Ohio Revised Code defines a record as a) any document stored on a fixed medium (paper, computer, film, audio/video, etc.) that is b) created, received or sent under jurisdiction of a public office, and c) serves to document the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, and other activities of the office.

## **Is a voicemail a record? Is a note? How about drafts?**

Voicemails, and handwritten voicemail messages, are generally considered transient or transitory records, meaning that they have short-term use only. Transient records are records that are created or received as routine business is conducted, as we prepare other records that will take their place, and as reference. They do not set policy or official guidance. Voicemails, notes, superseded drafts, and copies should be included your retention schedule as transient records with a retention period of “until no longer of administrative value.”

## **How do I determine the retention period for records?**

When setting retention periods, you should take the four “values” of the records into account:

- Administrative – how long does your office need these records to do your work? Consult the records creator.
  - Fiscal – is the record needed for an audit? Consult your fiscal officer or the Auditor of State’s office.
  - Legal – does the record document any rights or obligations? Consult your legal counsel.
  - Historical – does the records contain important information about people and places? The State Archives reviews your disposition forms for this value as the reviewing agent at the historical society.
- Retention periods are determined and expressed in one of three ways:
- In terms of time (e.g., "retain three years" or "retain permanently").
  - In terms of an event or action (e.g., "retain until audit report is released by the Auditor of State" or "retain until case closed").
  - In terms of both (e.g., "retain six months after State Auditor's audit report is released" or "retain three years after case closed").

- A retention period may be subdivided: "Retain in office five years, then retain in storage area for five more years, then destroy."

Suggested records retention periods can be found at [www.ohiohistory.org/lgrforms](http://www.ohiohistory.org/lgrforms). Before using these retention periods, they must first be submitted on an RC-2 form to the Records Commission, State Archives, and State Auditor for signature. You can also see what governments similar to yours are doing by requesting copies of their retention schedules, or asking for assistance on the [Ohio Local Government listserv](#). You can also check [model retention schedules from other states](#) through their websites.

### How do I list records of various media types on my RC-2?

If you are keeping both paper and electronic records for the same length time, they could be listed together, with both media types listed. If you are keeping different lengths of time, they should be listed on separate lines. Examples are below.

Sched. No.	Title/Description	Media Type	Retention
2016-01	Cancelled Checks	Paper/Electronic	3 years

This states that you plan on keeping both the paper and the scanned version for 3 years.

Sched. No.	Title/Description	Media Type	Retention
2016-01a	Cancelled Checks	Paper	Retain until scanned
2016-01b	Cancelled Checks	Electronic	3 years

This states that once the paper is scanned you will be disposing of the paper and retaining the scanned version for 3 years

### **Do I have to use the retention periods listed in the manuals?**

The LGRP manuals provide only suggested retention periods. Your local records commission may approve other retention periods.

### **How long should we keep email?**

Email itself is the medium, not a record series, and should be retained according to its content. For more information on managing email see the Ohio Electronic Records Committee's [Managing Email Guidelines](#).

### **Where do I send the RC forms?**

You should send your completed RC forms to the Ohio History Connection, State Archives, Local Government Records Program. You can either mail forms to 800 E. 17th Ave. Columbus, OH 43211 or email them to [localrecs@ohiohistory.org](mailto:localrecs@ohiohistory.org).

**Our Trumbull County Records Commission will submit these forms to the State and return the completed approved schedule back to the Departments.**

### **I've submitted a RC-2 or an RC-1 – how long will the approval process take?**

The RC-1s and RC-2s go through a 120-day review and authorization process. The Ohio Revised Code gives the State Archives 60 days to review and the Auditor of State's representative has 60 days to authorize the form. Once the Auditor of the State has finished their review the forms are sent back to the State Archives where we scan the forms and return a copy to the local government via email if one is provided or by mail.



### **Will I get my office's RC-3 returned to me?**

Typically no, we will not return RC-3s after we have reviewed them. If you have not heard from us after 15 business days from the receipt of the form, there are no records that we wish to select for enduring historical value. If you would like to receive notice that your RC-3 has been received, you can include an email on the form or send a Self-Addressed stamped envelope with the form.

### **Do I still need to submit an RC-3?**

With the passage of House Bill 153 by the 129<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, if your RC-2 was signed by your local records commission after September 29, 2011, RC-3 forms will only be required for records series indicated by Ohio History Connection-LGRP on your RC-2 form. If the record series indicates that an RC-3 is required or if your RC-2 was signed on or before September 29, 2011, an RC-3 is required.

Please contact the Ohio History Connection-LGRP if you wish to dispose of a record that is more than 50 years old, even if the RC-2 does not require a RC-3. While the age of a record is not the only factor that determines historical value, in general, records that are 50 years old or older are more likely to have historical value.

With this change we ask local governments to include a brief description for each records series on your RC-2 forms so that we may more accurately determine which records series will require a RC-3 form. We suggest that your local records commission continues to document the disposal of all records series internally.

### **A local historical society is interested in my records – am I allowed to give government records to an institution other than the Ohio History Connection– State Archives?**

Absolutely. If a local historical society, university, or other institution is interested in your records, the institution is required to sign a deposit agreement with the State Archives that guarantees that the organization will provide the public unfettered access to the records, and store them properly. The government is required to document the transfer with an [RC-1 or RC-3](#) sent to the

State Archives.

### **Can I scan my records and dispose of the paper records?**

Although the Ohio History Connection, which administers the State Archives of Ohio, acknowledges the utility of maintaining digital images for access and retrieval purposes, it does not support the permanent maintenance of records solely in electronic image formats. Technological changes are rapid and constant. With no standards in existence for ensuring the long-term validity and survivability of digital images, it is nearly impossible to predict whether those imaged records will be retrievable in the future. Even well-implemented migration plans cannot assure that data will not be lost. With this in mind, the State Archives strongly recommends maintaining an eye-readable backup of any records deemed of permanent value that have been digitally imaged for electronic storage. However, it is ultimately the decision of the local government and records commission and should be accounted for in the records retention schedule (RC-2). For more information we have a statement on [maintaining digitally imaged records permanently](#). The Ohio Electronic Records Committee also has [document imaging guidelines](#).

### **I have questions about electronic records management and microfilming vendors – can you recommend any?**

The Ohio History Connection does not recommend vendors or service providers. In general, governments considering vendors should make sure vendors are tailoring their services to your needs. Many vendors can produce microfilm from digital images and vice versa, allowing you the best of both worlds – access and long term preservation. Be sure that the vendor has worked with governments similar to yours in size and functions; ask the vendor for names and contact information of other governments they have worked with.

### **How should I store my records?**

In a nutshell: cool, dry and constant. Storing paper records in a cool (65-70 degree) space with low (50-60%) humidity is the best way to slow the deterioration of paper records. The most important thing to maintain is a constant temperature and humidity – even if the ideal temperature isn't realistic

for your facility, constant environment will go a long way towards improving the longevity of your records. Store records in labeled boxes on metal shelves in a room without sunlight, with the lowest shelf at least a few inches off the floor. This arrangement will make it easier for to find and access records. If bound volumes won't fit in boxes, they should be stored flat, without stacking too many on top of one another. Try not to store records on the top shelf to protect them from leaks. Shelving will also make it easier to inventory and locate records, or identify which records were destroyed in the case of a disaster. Flooding is the most common cause of damaged records: boxes can protect records from a leaky ceiling, and keeping them off the floor can protect them from standing water, and shelves are easily covered with plastic sheeting until a leak is repaired. Tracking temperature and humidity, and making regular, documented checks for leaks and drafts are basic precautions that can keep small problems from becoming big ones.

**Is there a recommended method of destruction once records have met their retention?**

There is not a specified form of destruction. If the records are confidential, then shredding is preferred. Recycling may be done with care. Your local government may have a preferred method or a shredding schedule set up. We do not generally recommend burning or tossing records into a dumpster.

**My records have been damaged in a disaster (flood, leak, fire, vermin, mold, etc) and it's not safe or possible to recover them. What do I do?**

The Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) is a nonprofit organization that publishes great resources for dealing with issues like these. Their online preservation [leaflets](#) contain step by step instructions for records emergency management.

Your safety and the safety of your staff are paramount. In the event of a disaster, your records commission will need to weigh the possible health concerns and the resources needed to recover the records versus the administrative, legal, fiscal and historical value of the records. If your records commission decides that the records are beyond help, you may destroy them, and document their destruction with an [RC-1 or RC-3 form](#).

## **How can I prepare for or prevent a disaster that destroys my records?**

Unfortunately, many governments don't think about a records disaster until it happens. It is far easier and far less expensive to prevent a records disaster than to recover from one. This might be a good opportunity for you and the other members of your government to think about a records disaster planning and prevention. The Ohio History Connection, State Archives, has compiled some [advice and resources](#). Additional resources can be found through the [National Archives and Records Administration](#), the [Society of American Archivists](#), and the [Northeast Document Conservation Center](#).