

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION**General Records Schedule 20;
Disposition of Electronic Records**

AGENCY: National Archives and Records Administration.

ACTION: Notice of issuance of General Records Schedule.

SUMMARY: General Records Schedules (GRS) are issued by the Archivist of the United States to provide disposal authorization for temporary records common to several or all agencies of the Federal Government. NARA is obliged by the Federal Records Act to issue such schedules, and Federal agencies are required to follow their provisions (44 U.S.C. 3303a(d)). On October 7, 1994, NARA published a notice in the **Federal Register** requesting comment on a revision of General Records Schedules. The revision included removal of several items from GRS 23, Records Common to Most Offices Within Agencies, and consolidation of those items with other electronic records in GRS 20. Other changes were made to clarify and extend the coverage of some of the items. The following is a summary of the comments received and NARA's response. The final GRS 20 was approved on August 14, 1995.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: James J. Hastings, Director, Records Appraisal and Disposition Division, National Archives at College Park, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740-6001. (301) 713-7100, ext. 274.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**Background**

NARA proposed consolidating authority for the disposition of generic electronic records into General Records Schedule (GRS) 20, Electronic Records, by moving several items from GRS 23, Records Common to Most Offices Within Agencies, to GRS 20. On August 14, 1995, the Archivist of the United States approved the revised GRS 20. It is now in effect.

The revised GRS 20 authorizes deletion of certain types of electronic records associated with large data base systems, such as inputs, outputs, processing files, special format files, and system documentation for systems that have been appraised by NARA as temporary. To protect potentially permanent records, several of these items are limited by specific exclusions. As a result of the move of GRS 23 items that pertain to electronic records into GRS 20, the revised GRS 20 also authorizes deletion of records on word processing and electronic mail systems

once a recordkeeping copy has been made, and authorizes deletion of electronically-generated administrative spreadsheets and other administrative records that are included in recordkeeping systems that have been authorized for disposal by NARA. All electronic records not covered by GRS 20 or other General Records Schedules must be scheduled individually.

For convenience of reference, the revised GRS 20 and GRS 23 are printed at the end of this notice.

Comments and Responses

NARA received 37 written responses after publication of the proposed changes to GRS 20 and 23 in the **Federal Register** on October 17, 1994. Fourteen of the comments were submitted by Federal agencies and 23 were submitted by members of the public. The responses from Federal agencies were supportive of the changes; two wrote only to provide concurrence. Comments from the Federal agencies focused on the coverage and applicability of the General Records Schedules; ten requested clarifications or suggested changes. One agency commented on the overall coverage of the GRS. The comments from twenty-one members of the public and professional organizations, two Federal agencies, and two state archivists were critical of the proposal. Except for the response from one state archivist, all critical comments were based on a belief that implementation of the revised schedules would result in destruction of valuable Federal documentation.

Neither the agencies nor the public commented on the revised GRS 23.

Several agencies made general comments on the GRS or specifically on GRS 20 that were not responsive to the notice in the **Federal Register**. Nevertheless, NARA will carefully review these comments and will consider incorporating them in future changes to the GRS, NARA handbooks or other guidance. They will not be addressed in this notice.

The comments that were received included some that were general and applied to more than one of the items in the proposed GRS. Others were specifically directed to one particular item. The comments and responses listed below pertain first to the overall comments and then to those that were addressed to specific items.

The full set of comments on the revision to GRS 20 that was proposed on October 17, 1994, is available for public inspection at the National Archives at College Park, Records Appraisal and Disposition Division, Room 2100, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, MD 20740.

1. Value of Electronic Records

a. *Comments.* Twenty-six respondents expressed an overall concern about the changes to GRS 20. In their opinion GRS authorization for deletion of electronic versions of records that had been converted to paper or microform would be inappropriate. They stressed that hard copy records are not satisfactory replacements for records in electronic format and cited the well-known advantages of electronic records for future research. They believe that the substitution of hard copy records would hamper the work of future researchers, so agencies should be required to preserve electronically the records that they create on computers. Respondents cited several examples of the feasibility of preserving electronic records, including the State Department's Foreign Affairs Information System, a system in the Canadian Trade Negotiations Office, and a pilot project at the Navy Research Laboratory as examples of the feasibility of preserving records electronically.

b. *Response.* NARA has recognized for many years the advantages electronic records have for searching, manipulating, and storing information. In 1968 NARA established an organizational unit to develop policies for the selection and preservation of electronic records. Since that time NARA's appraisal guidelines have stressed the added value brought by the manipulability of automated data. In addition to the initial focus on archival preservation of electronic records, NARA concentrated on implementing its statutory obligation to provide agencies with the authority to delete electronic records that have only temporary value. Accordingly, the first version of GRS 20 was published in 1972 to provide disposal authority for specific categories of temporary records associated with mainframe applications. Excluded from its coverage, and all subsequent revisions, were the types of records generated by large data systems that might have archival value.

A 1988 revision of the GRS extended disposal authority to specific categories of records generated by end-user applications on stand-alone or networked computers used by individuals. This new GRS, General Records Schedule 23, covered word processing, electronic mail, spreadsheets, and administrative data bases. The items concerning these applications authorized the deletion of the electronic versions of records created after they were printed to hard copy. Use of word processing software evolved from use of typewriters and

stand-alone word processors used to produce paper documents. Even as networks were installed, agencies continued to maintain records produced with office automation applications in organized paper files, especially since end-user applications were not designed to classify, index, and maintain documents for their authorized retention period.

NARA's final standards for the management of e-mail and the revision to GRS 20 that has now been approved clarify the disposition authority for electronic records produced by end-users. The GRS 23 that was approved in 1988 authorized deletion of word processing and e-mail records from the "live" system after they had been copied to paper or microform. This authority has now been moved to GRS 20 and is extended to authorize deletion of electronic mail and word processing records from the "live" system after they have been copied to an *electronic* recordkeeping system. It also clearly states the requirement to preserve transmission data with electronic mail records to ensure that their context as well as content are preserved. GRS 20 does *not* authorize the deletion of the versions of electronic mail or word processing records that have been placed in the agency's recordkeeping system.

The new GRS 20 recognizes that electronic mail and word processing applications are used to create Federal records, including some permanent records. Separate NARA guidance and regulations instruct agencies to appropriately preserve records that are produced through office automation in the form that they determine is best to accomplish their mission within their administrative and fiscal capabilities.

GRS 20, NARA regulations, and NARA guidance instruct agencies to identify records created using office automation and to maintain them in a recordkeeping system that preserves their content, structure, and context for their required retention period. For records to be useful they must be accessible to all authorized staff, and must be maintained in recordkeeping systems that have the capability to group similar records and provide the necessary context to connect the record with the relevant agency function or transaction. Storage of electronic mail or word processing records on electronic information systems that do not have these attributes will not satisfy the needs of the agency or the needs of future researchers.

Search capability and context would be severely limited if records are stored in disparate electronic files maintained

by individuals rather than in agency-controlled recordkeeping systems. Furthermore, if electronic records are stored in electronic information systems without records management functionality, permanent records may not be readily accessible for research. Unless the records are adequately indexed, searches, even full-text searches, may fail to find all documents relevant to the subject of the query. In addition, numerous irrelevant temporary records, that would be segregable in systems with records management functionality, may be found. Agency records can be managed only if they are in agency recordkeeping systems.

The respondents who expressed this concern mistakenly concluded that the proposed GRS 20 authorized the deletion of valuable records. On the contrary, GRS 20 requires the preservation of valuable records by instructing agencies to transfer them to an appropriate recordkeeping system. Only after the records have been properly preserved in a recordkeeping system will agencies be authorized by GRS 20 to delete the versions on the electronic mail and word processing systems. As indicated, most agencies have no viable alternative at the present time but to use their current paper files as their recordkeeping system. As the technology progresses, however, agencies will be able to consider converting to electronic recordkeeping systems for their records.

The critical point is that the revised GRS does not authorize the destruction of the recordkeeping copy of the electronic mail and word processing records. The unique program records that are produced with office automation will be maintained in organized, managed office recordkeeping systems. Federal agencies must have the authority to delete the original version from the "live" electronic information system to avoid system overload and to ensure effective records management. Program records that have been transferred to the recordkeeping system will not be affected by GRS 20. Their disposition is controlled by other general or specific records schedules.

NARA appraises and schedules records in organized recordkeeping systems. It is essential for the originating agency, for NARA, and for future researchers that records, especially those appraised as permanent, be maintained in recordkeeping systems with records management functionality to allow for appropriate maintenance and disposition.

The examples cited by some of the respondents as support for their position serve more as useful illustrations of NARA's position. The Department of State's Foreign Affairs Information System (now the Automated Data System) is not a word processing or electronic communications system. It is a *recordkeeping* system that stores, indexes, and retrieves the Department's important program records. It is not related in any way to GRS 20. The system was appraised as permanent by NARA in 1983 and consists of an automated index, microfilm copies of paper documents, computer output microfilm of electronic message traffic, and digitally stored texts of electronic message traffic. This is an excellent example of the benefits of transferring records from various formats to a recordkeeping system to ensure their continued availability to staff and preservation for NARA.

The Canadian Trade Negotiation Office did not have an electronic recordkeeping system for its office automation records. It maintained its records either on-line, on paper, or on backup tapes. The backup tapes were acquired in their entirety by the National Archives of Canada. They consisted of a complicated mixture of data, files, documents, directories, and software and included records that had permanent value, records with no archival value, and duplicates. If the records had been maintained on a recordkeeping system in the agency, the Canadian National Archives would have been able to identify, appraise, and acquire only records with permanent value and allow the agency to dispose of the remainder. Because of the great value of the records and the significance of the agency, the National Archives of Canada undertook extraordinary measures to impose basic intellectual order on the system data, files, and directories to make them retrievable. Despite this time consuming project, information concerning the Trade Negotiation Office's functions, activities, and records management practices was not recreated. The Canadian experience with this project is a powerful example of the need for records to be preserved by an agency on a recordkeeping system.

The pilot project by the Navy Research Laboratory cited by respondents also supports NARA's position that records need to be maintained in a recordkeeping system. The Navy project was conducted by an agency historian who invested approximately one hour to categorize 100-150 messages that were maintained

on the electronic mail system. Additional time was required to edit entries for input into a separate database and to manage the database. Federal agencies routinely create or receive tens of thousands of messages per day. If these records were preserved and managed in a recordkeeping system, as advocated by NARA, such labor intensive, time consuming work as was done in the Navy pilot project would not be necessary. If, on the other hand, Federal agencies were to adopt the Navy pilot project as a model they would be required to analyze each message individually, provide whatever context would be necessary, and enter the data into a database. If an agency has an average of 40,000 messages per week (a relatively low average), this would require approximately 400 staff hours, the equivalent of 10 full time employees, just to categorize the messages. This is an expenditure that no agency can afford and is, no doubt, the reason that the Navy did not implement the recommendations of the pilot project.

Agencies must maintain their records in organized files that are designed for their operational needs. Agencies that currently have traditional paper files print their electronic mail records, word processing records, spreadsheets, and data base reports so that their files are complete, comprehensible, and in context with related records. Agency functions that have not been automated must be supported by hard copy files, even when some types of related records are generated electronically. Agencies that decide to maintain their records in electronic recordkeeping systems do so for compelling operational needs, not for future researchers. In some cases, such as the State Department example cited by respondents, agencies create automated indexes to hard-copy records rather than digitizing all of the records themselves. In any case, the decision must be based on an analysis of the needs of and benefits to the agency, balanced against available resources. The role of NARA is to provide guidance and regulations that, when properly implemented, will result in agency recordkeeping systems that protect records for their authorized retention period, and, for permanent records, in a format that allows transfer to the National Archives.

If agencies were to maintain their electronic mail and word processing records on electronic information systems that do not provide the necessary records management functions, just for the sake of maintaining them in electronic format as many respondents advocate, the

records would be of limited use to both the originating agency and to future researchers. Such a practice would not support agency operations, and researchers would have to search disassociated, unindexed collections of materials for potentially valuable records, which would result in finding a large proportion of irrelevant documents, an inefficient use of research time.

2. Disposition Instructions

a. *Comments.* One agency and a member of the public expressed concern about the GRS 20 disposition instructions. They said that "delete when no longer needed" was too vague or too broad. A state archivist also expressed concern that the schedule would authorize destruction of electronic records and related documentation needed for establishing authenticity and legal admissibility of electronic records.

b. *Response.* In response to these concerns, NARA has replaced "delete when no longer needed" with "delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes" for items 1a, 1c, 3b(1), 3b(3), 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12a, and 12b. NARA also revised the disposition instruction for item 13 to read "delete from the word processing system when no longer needed for updating, revision, or convenience of reference," and the disposition instruction for item 14 was changed to read "delete from the e-mail system when no longer needed for convenience of reference." In addition, NARA changed the disposition for item 11a to read "destroy or delete when superseded or obsolete, or upon authorized deletion of the related master file or data base, or upon the destruction of the output of the system if the output has legal value, whichever is latest."

3. Item 3

a. *Comment.* An agency suggested that item 3, Electronic Versions of Records Scheduled for Disposal, be extended to GRS 17, Cartographic, Aerial Photographic, Architectural, and Engineering Records, and GRS 21, Audiovisual Records.

b. *Response.* Because of the lack of standards for such digitized records at this time, NARA has not expanded this item as suggested.

4. Item 8

a. *Comments.* Four agencies raised questions about the coverage of backups. Two agencies found the distinction between system and security backups to be confusing. One agency

suggested that GRS 20 acknowledge that system backups may be records under the Freedom of Information Act, and another agency suggested that the introduction acknowledge that courts have allowed parties to request documents that exist only on system backups. Two other agencies questioned the meaning of "record copy" in the definition of system backups in the introduction and recommended adding system backups as a new subitem under item 8. One agency requested that a subitem be added to item 8 to cover unscheduled records, and that the disposition of item 8 be amended to provide that if records with different retention periods are on backup copies, the backup should be kept for the longest retention period. One state archivist stated that the disposition for item 8 is inconsistent with accepted processing practices.

Some of the public respondents to the proposed GRS change also took issue with the item on backups. In their view NARA drew an erroneous distinction between the backups that mirror the "logical" format of the system and those that mirror the "physical" format. They suggested that all categories of backups are records because they serve the same function of permitting recovery of an electronic record or file if the record or file is damaged or erased from the system, and recommended that item 8 be left unchanged.

b. *Response.* NARA has revised item 8 to reflect some of the comments and to clarify its coverage. Item 8a has been retitled "Backups for Files" to eliminate the distinction that formerly was made between system and security backups. This distinction brought about a great deal of confusion that tended to distract from the purpose of the item. Consequently, the new item 8a covers backups, regardless of how they are characterized, that are determined by the creating agency to be Federal records. The reference to classification of the format of backups ("logical" or "physical") was also deleted.

5. Item 13

a. *Comments.* One agency stated that item 13, Word Processing Files, is inappropriate because disposition should be based on content, not media. Another agency suggested that item 13 should provide authorization for deletion of superseded drafts.

b. *Response.* NARA believes that this item responds to a real need. As indicated earlier, the GRS has covered the original version of word processing records since 1988. Over the years many agencies have told NARA that it has proven very useful to them in

conducting their records management programs. By providing authorization for deletion of the word processing copy of documents that are preserved elsewhere in a recordkeeping system, NARA has freed Federal records officers from scheduling the duplicative records in those systems. Consequently, the records officers can concentrate on scheduling the unique electronic records in their agencies.

NARA has not added provisions to this item concerning draft documents. In most cases, drafts are nonrecord materials so no disposition authority is required. In those instances where drafts created on word processing systems are records, as described in NARA regulations (36 CFR 1222.34), the revised GRS 20 will cover them as it covers other records generated electronically. No further authorization is needed in the GRS. NARA will be issuing guidance on agency recordkeeping requirements that includes a discussion of drafts and provides criteria for determining when they are records.

NARA did modify item 13 as a result of numerous meetings and discussions with records officers and other interested parties, and further analysis of recordkeeping requirements. Records must be available to all authorized users and properly managed to ensure their authorized, timely, and appropriate disposition. Documents meeting the definition of record that are only in individuals' word processing directories, rather than agency recordkeeping systems, are not accessible to other staff members. Even accessible network word processing directories are inadequate if they are part of information systems that lack records management functionality. It is critical that agencies instruct their staff members to copy or transfer any word processing documents that are Federal records to paper or electronic recordkeeping systems. Consequently, NARA deleted subitem 13b. This subitem would have authorized deletion of records that were maintained only on the word processing system until the expiration of the retention period authorized by another GRS item or agency schedule. The deletion of item 13b from GRS 20 reinforces the necessity for agencies to properly maintain Federal records in recordkeeping systems.

6. Item 14

a. *Comments.* One agency suggested that item 14, Electronic Mail Records, should authorize deletion of recipients' copies of messages unless the recipient's copy has been designated by the agency

as a record. The same agency requested that NARA add a subitem to authorize deletion when no longer needed of routine types of messages, such as meeting announcements and acknowledgments. Another agency suggested that item 14 include definitions of transmission data and receipt data and an agency suggested that GRS 20 address the issue of record status determinations. Two agencies expressed concern that item 14 would require electronic maintenance of electronic mail. Many public respondents objected to item 14 because it permitted hard copy records to be substituted for electronic versions (see comments and response number 1).

b. *Response.* NARA has modified the item and the introduction to GRS 20 to provide more information on transmission and receipt data.

Item 14 also has been modified to drop its prior reference (item 14b) to records maintained on the electronic mail system itself. Just as with word processing records, e-mail records must be maintained in recordkeeping systems that allow accessibility and proper records management. See the response to comments on item 13, above, for further explanation of this change.

Otherwise, NARA has not adopted the suggestions concerning this item. Blanket authorization for deletion of recipients' copies of messages would be inappropriate. Sometimes such copies are unique Federal records. For example, messages received through external systems would not be duplicated elsewhere in the agency. Also, to ensure file integrity, recipients' copies of messages often need to be incorporated into a recordkeeping system in the recipient's office. Agencies are responsible for issuing instructions on identifying record copies of documents, consistent with NARA regulations and guidance. Because the GRS is a records disposition schedule, it is not the appropriate mechanism for addressing records creation issues. NARA will address these issues in standards or guidance dealing with records creation and maintenance. As indicated in the response number 1, GRS 20 does not require maintenance of electronic mail records in electronic form. Item 14 specifically covers electronic mail records converted to paper or microform, as well as those copied for maintenance in electronic recordkeeping systems.

During the past two years NARA has worked closely with Federal agencies on the development of records management guidance concerning electronic mail. NARA staff members have consulted

extensively with records managers and information resource officials in major agencies on the development of records management guidance for electronic mail, and, after publication of proposed standards on March 24, 1994 (59 FR 13906), held discussion meetings and made presentations attended by over 840 agency records managers, information resource managers, legal staff, and others. Based on knowledge and experience, NARA believes that implementation of this GRS change, along with revised regulations and NARA guidance, will significantly improve the quality of Federal documentation by appropriate preservation of electronic mail records. NARA has given authority under the Federal Records Act to the Federal agencies to delete electronic mail records from their electronic mail systems *only* after a copy of the full message with names of senders and addresses and date of transmission, and receipts when required, have been preserved elsewhere.

7. Item 15

a. *Comments:* The public comments included a concern that item 15, Spreadsheets, could authorize the destruction of critical information that is in the electronic version of a spreadsheet that would not be in a paper printout. The printout would only contain the results of the computation, not the formulas or other information that was used to reach the results. Such computational information should be preserved with the electronic spreadsheet, particularly when it concerns important budgetary, funding, or other analysis.

b. *Response:* The coverage of item 15, as proposed in October 1994, was not clear. It was not intended to apply to all program-related spreadsheets that were developed for agency use. As the respondents correctly indicated, if this item were to apply to program records generally its application could have resulted in the loss of potentially valuable information that was used to produce a spreadsheet. Consequently, item 15 has been rewritten to clarify the limitation of its coverage. It now authorizes the deletion of electronic spreadsheets only if they support administrative, rather than program, functions or if they were generated by an individual only for background purposes.

Conclusion

The Federal Government generates an incalculable number of paper, electronic, and audiovisual records every day. The vast majority (95-98%)

of these are temporary records and many fit into categories that are common throughout the Government. The GRS is a mechanism mandated by law to provide disposition authorities for such common temporary records. GRS 20 is designed to provide authority for the deletion of common temporary records that are generated by computers. As indicated in the responses to comments above, approval of GRS 20 will not affect unique program records that have been preserved in a recordkeeping system. Federal agency records officers are responsible for scheduling the records that are not covered by the GRS. GRS 20 will allow agencies and NARA to concentrate more resources on unique program records. Approval of the revised GRS 20 will allow NARA to continue to focus attention on electronic records with enduring value by eliminating a large proportion of those without such value from further consideration.

Dated: August 14, 1995.

John W. Carlin,

Archivist of the United States.

Following is the text of GRS 20 and GRS 23.

General Records Schedule 20

Electronic Records

This schedule provides disposal authorization for certain electronic records and specified hard-copy (paper) or microform records that are integrally related to the electronic records.

This schedule applies to disposable electronic records created or received by Federal agencies including those managed for agencies by contractors. It covers records created by computer operators, programmers, analysts, systems administrators, and all personnel with access to a computer. Disposition authority is provided for certain master files, including some tables that are components of data base management systems, and certain files created from master files for specific purposes. In addition, this schedule covers certain disposable electronic records produced by end users in office automation applications. These disposition authorities apply to the categories of electronic records described in GRS 20, regardless of the type of computer used to create or store these records.

GRS 20 does not cover all electronic records. Electronic records not covered by GRS 20 may not be destroyed unless authorized by a Standard Form 115 that has been approved by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).

The records covered by several items in this schedule are authorized for erasure or deletion when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes. NARA cannot establish a more specific retention that would be appropriate in all applications. Each agency should, when appropriate, determine a more specific disposition instruction, such as "Delete after X update cycles" or "Delete when X years old," for inclusion in its records disposition directives or manual. NARA approval is not needed to set retention periods for records in the GRS that are authorized for destruction when no longer needed.

Items 2a and 1a (in part) of this schedule apply to hard-copy or microform records used in conjunction with electronic files. Item 1 also covers printouts produced to test, use, and maintain master files. Items 10 and 11 of this schedule should be applied to special purpose programs and documentation for disposable electronic records whatever the medium in which such documentation and programs exist.

This schedule has been revised to include electronically-generated records previously covered in General Records Schedule 23, Records Common to Most Offices. The original numbering of the items in GRS 20 has been preserved. The items moved from GRS 23 have been added at the end, except the item covering administrative data bases that has been incorporated into item 3.

Electronic versions of records authorized for disposal elsewhere in the GRS may be deleted under the provisions of item 3 of GRS 20.

See also 36 CFR Part 1234 for NARA regulations on electronic records management.

1. Files/Records Relating to the Creation, Use, and Maintenance of Computer Systems, Applications, or Electronic Records

a. Electronic files or records created solely to test system performance, as well as hard-copy printouts and related documentation for the electronic files/records.

Delete/destroy when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

b. Electronic files or records used to create or update a master file, including, but not limited to, work files, valid transaction files, and intermediate input/output records.

Delete after information has been transferred to the master file and verified.

c. Electronic files and hard-copy printouts created to monitor system usage, including, but not limited to, log-in files, password files, audit trail files, system usage files, and cost-back files used to assess charges for system use.

Delete/destroy when the agency determines they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

2. Input/Source Records

a. Non-electronic documents or forms designed and used solely to create, update, or modify the records in an electronic medium and not required for audit or legal purposes (such as need for signatures) and not previously scheduled for permanent retention in a NARA-approved agency records schedule.

Destroy after the information has been converted to an electronic medium and verified, or when no longer needed to support the reconstruction of, or serve as the backup to, the master file, whichever is later.

b. Electronic records, except as noted in item 2c, entered into the system during an update process, and not required for audit and legal purposes.

Delete when data have been entered into the master file or database and verified, or when no longer required to support reconstruction of, or serve as back-up to, a master file or database, whichever is later.

c. Electronic records received from another agency and used as input/source records by the receiving agency, EXCLUDING records produced by another agency under the terms of an interagency agreement, or records created by another agency in response to the specific information needs of the receiving agency.

Delete when data have been entered into the master file or database and verified, or when no longer needed to support reconstruction of, or serve as back up to, the master file or database, whichever is later.

d. Computer files or records containing uncalibrated and unvalidated digital or analog data collected during observation or measurement activities or research and development programs and used as input for a digital master file or database.

Delete after the necessary data have been incorporated into a master file.

3. Electronic Versions of Records Scheduled for Disposal

a. Electronic versions of records that are scheduled for disposal under one or more items in GRS 1-16, 18, 22, or 23; EXCLUDING those that replace or

duplicate the following GRS items: GRS 1, items 21, 22, 25f; GRS 12, item 3; and GRS 18, item 5.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized by the GRS or when no longer needed, whichever is later.

b. Electronic records that support administrative housekeeping functions when the records are derived from or replace hard copy records authorized by NARA for destruction in an agency-specific records schedule.

(1) When hard copy records are retained to meet recordkeeping requirements.

Delete electronic version when the agency determines that it is no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

(2) When the electronic record replaces hard copy records that support administrative housekeeping functions.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy file, or when no longer needed, whichever is later.

(3) Hard copy printouts created for short-term administrative purposes.

Destroy when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

4. Data Files Consisting of Summarized Information

Records that contain summarized or aggregated information created by combining data elements or individual observations from a single master file or data base that is disposable under a GRS item or is authorized for deletion by a disposition job approved by NARA after January 1, 1988, EXCLUDING data files that are created as disclosure-free files to allow public access to the data which may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

(Note: Data files consisting of summarized information which were created from a master file or data base that is unscheduled, or that was scheduled as permanent but no longer exists or can no longer be accessed, may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval.)

5. Records Consisting of Extracted Information

Electronic files consisting solely of records extracted from a single master file or data base that is disposable under GRS 20 or approved for deletion by a NARA-approved disposition schedule, EXCLUDING extracts that are:

(a) Produced as disclosure-free files to allow public access to the data; or

(b) Produced by an extraction process which changes the informational content of the source master file or data base; which may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval. For print and technical reformat files see items 6 and 7 of this schedule respectively.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

(Notes: (1) Records consisting of extracted information that were created from a master file or data base that is unscheduled, or that was scheduled as permanent but no longer exists or can no longer be accessed may not be destroyed before securing NARA approval. (2) See item 12 of this schedule for other extracted data.)

6. Print File

Electronic file extracted from a master file or data base without changing it and used solely to produce hard-copy publications and/or printouts of tabulations, ledgers, registers, and statistical reports.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

7. Technical Reformat File

Electronic file consisting of data copied from a complete or partial master file or data base made for the specific purpose of information interchange and written with varying technical specifications, EXCLUDING files created for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

8. Backups of Files

Electronic copy, considered by the agency to be a Federal record, of the master copy of an electronic record or file and retained in case the master file or database is damaged or inadvertently erased.

a. File identical to records scheduled for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when the identical records have been captured in a subsequent backup file or when the identical records have been transferred to the National Archives and successfully copied.

b. File identical to records authorized for disposal in a NARA-approved records schedule.

Delete when the identical records have been deleted, or when replaced by a subsequent backup file.

9. Finding Aids (or Indexes)

Electronic indexes, lists, registers, and other finding aids used only to provide

access to records authorized for destruction by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115, EXCLUDING records containing abstracts or other information that can be used as an information source apart from the related records.

Delete with related records or when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes, whichever is later.

10. Special Purpose Programs

Application software necessary solely to use or maintain a master file or database authorized for disposal in a GRS item or a NARA-approved records schedule, EXCLUDING special purpose software necessary to use or maintain any unscheduled master file or database or any master file or database scheduled for transfer to the National Archives.

Delete when related master file or database has been deleted.

11. Documentation

a. Data systems specifications, file specifications, codebooks, record layouts, user guides, output specifications, and final reports (regardless of medium) relating to a master file or data base that has been authorized for destruction by the GRS or a NARA-approved disposition schedule.

Destroy or delete when superseded or obsolete, or upon authorized deletion of the related master file or data base, or upon the destruction of the output of the system if the output is needed to protect legal rights, whichever is latest.

b. Copies of records relating to system security, including records documenting periodic audits or review and recertification of sensitive applications, disaster and continuity plans, and risk analysis, as described in OMB Circular No. A-130.

Destroy or delete when superseded or obsolete.

(Notes: (1) Documentation that relates to permanent or unscheduled master files and data bases is not authorized for destruction by the GRS. (2) See item 1a of this schedule for documentation relating to system testing.)

12. Downloaded and Copied Data

Derived data and data files that are copied, extracted, merged, and/or calculated from other data generated within the agency, when the original data is retained.

a. Derived data used for ad hoc or one-time inspection, analysis or review, if the derived data is not needed to support the results of the inspection, analysis or review.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for

administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

b. Derived data that provide user access in lieu of hard copy reports that are authorized for disposal.

Delete when the agency determines that they are no longer needed for administrative, legal, audit, or other operational purposes.

c. Metadata or reference data, such as format, range, or domain specifications, which is transferred from a host computer or server to another computer for input, updating, or transaction processing operations.

Delete from the receiving system or device when no longer needed for processing.

(Note: See item 5 of this schedule for other extracted data.)

13. Word Processing Files

Documents such as letters, memoranda, reports, handbooks, directives, and manuals recorded on electronic media such as hard disks or floppy diskettes after they have been copied to an electronic recordkeeping system, paper, or microform for recordkeeping purposes.

Delete from the word processing system when no longer needed for updating or revision.

14. Electronic Mail Records

Senders' and recipients' versions of electronic mail messages that meet the definition of Federal records, and any attachments to the record messages after they have been copied to an electronic recordkeeping system, paper or microform for recordkeeping purposes.

Delete from the e-mail system after copying to a recordkeeping system.

(Note: Along with the message text, the recordkeeping system must capture the names of sender and recipients and date (transmission data for recordkeeping purposes) and any receipt data when required.)

15. Electronic Spreadsheets

Electronic spreadsheets generated to support administrative functions or generated by an individual as background materials or feeder reports.

a. When used to produce hard copy that is maintained in organized files.

Delete when no longer needed to update or produce hard copy.

b. When maintained only in electronic form.

Delete after the expiration of the retention period authorized for the hard copy by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115. If the electronic version replaces hard copy records with differing retention periods and agency software does not readily permit selective

deletion, delete after the longest retention period has expired.

General Records Schedule 23

Records Common to Most Offices Within Agencies

This schedule provides for the disposal of certain records common to most offices in Federal agencies. It covers administrative subject files; facilitative records such as suspense files, tracking and control records, calendars, and indexes; and transitory documents. This schedule does not apply to any materials that the agency has determined to be nonrecord or to materials such as calendars or work schedules claimed as personal.

Office Administrative Files described under item 1 are records retained by an originating office as its record of initiation of an action, request, or response to requests for information. This item may be applied only to separate administrative files containing such records as copies of documents submitted to other offices for action including budget feeder documents, purchase orders, training requests. Item 1 may not be applied to files that also contain program records, and it may not be applied by an office that receives and takes action on documents submitted by other offices.

Several items covering electronic records produced on stand-alone or networked personal computers (such as word processing files, administrative data bases, and spreadsheets) that were previously in this schedule have been moved to General Records Schedule 20, Electronic Records. To preserve the previous numbering of the items in GRS 23, the item numbers that have been moved have been reserved. The disposition of records described in this schedule that are created in electronic form is governed by GRS 20, item 3.

1. Office Administrative Files

Records accumulated by individual offices that relate to the internal administration or housekeeping activities of the office rather than the functions for which the office exists. In general, these records relate to the office organization, staffing, procedures, and communications; the expenditure of funds, including budget records; day-to-day administration of office personnel including training and travel; supplies and office services and equipment requests and receipts; and the use of office space and utilities. They may also include copies of internal activity and workload reports (including work progress, statistical, and narrative reports prepared in the office and

forwarded to higher levels) and other materials that do not serve as unique documentation of the programs of the office.

Destroy when 2 years old, or when no longer needed, whichever is sooner.

(Note: This schedule is not applicable to the record copies of organizational charts, functional statements, and related records that document the essential organization, staffing, and procedures of the office, which must be scheduled prior to disposition by submitting an SF 115 to NARA.)

2-4. Reserved.

5. Schedules of Daily Activities

Calendars, appointment books, schedules, logs, diaries, and other records documenting meetings, appointments, telephone calls, trips, visits, and other activities by Federal employees while serving in an official capacity, EXCLUDING materials determined to be personal.

a. Records containing substantive information relating to official activities, the substance of which has not been incorporated into official files, EXCLUDING records relating to the official activities of high government officials (see note).

Destroy or delete when 2 years old.

(Note: High level officials include the heads of departments and independent agencies; their deputies and assistants; the heads of program offices and staff offices including assistant secretaries, administrators, and commissioners; directors of offices, bureaus, or equivalent; principal regional officials; staff assistants to those aforementioned officials, such as special assistants, confidential assistants, and administrative assistants; and career Federal employees, political appointees, and officers of the Armed Forces serving in equivalent or comparable positions. Unique substantive records relating to the activities of these individuals must be scheduled by submission of an SF 115 to NARA.)

b. Records documenting routine activities containing no substantive information and records containing substantive information, the substance of which has been incorporated into organized files.

Destroy or delete when no longer needed for convenience of reference.

(Note: GRS 20, item 3, authorizes deletion of electronic records described by subitems a and b of this item.)

6. Suspense Files

Documents arranged in chronological order as a reminder that an action is required on a given date or that a reply to action is expected and, if not received, should be traced on a given date.

a. A note or other reminder to take action.

Destroy after action is taken.

b. The file copy or an extra copy of an outgoing communication, filed by the date on which a reply is expected.

Withdraw documents when reply is received. (1) If suspense copy is an extra copy, destroy immediately. (2) If suspense copy is the file copy, incorporate it into the official files.

7. Transitory Files

Documents of short-term interest which have no documentary or evidential value and normally need not be kept more than 90 days. Examples of transitory correspondence are shown below.

a. Routine requests for information or publications and copies of replies which require no administrative action, no

policy decision, and no special compilation or research for reply.

b. Originating office copies of letters of transmittal that do not add any information to that contained in the transmitted material, and receiving office copy if filed separately from transmitted material.

c. Quasi-official notices including memoranda and other records that do not serve as the basis of official actions, such as notices of holidays or charity and welfare fund appeals, bond campaigns, and similar records.

Destroy when 3 months old, or when no longer needed, whichever is sooner.

8. Tracking and Control Records

Logs, registers, and other records used to control or document the status of correspondence, reports, or other

records that are authorized for destruction by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115.

Destroy or delete when no longer needed.

9. Finding Aids (or Indexes)

Indexes, lists, registers, and other finding aids used only to provide access to records authorized for destruction by the GRS or a NARA-approved SF 115, EXCLUDING records containing abstracts or other information that can be used as an information source apart from the related records.

Destroy or delete with the related records or sooner if no longer needed.

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