

The Record Keeper

CFS. Safeguarding your future – Securing your past.

An important aspect of any Records Management program is retention scheduling. This schedule not only identifies which records have to be kept and for how long but also provides a process for determining when records can be disposed of.

Once the decision has been made to properly destroy outdated business records and documents, the next decision that must be made is when those records can be destroyed. The period of time that business records are stored should be determined by a retention schedule that takes into consideration their useful value to the business and the governing legal requirements.

No record should be kept longer than this retention period. By not adhering to a program of routinely destroying stored records, a company exhibits suspicious disposal practices that could be negatively construed in the event of litigation or audit. Also, there is legislation and laws that, in the event of a lawsuit, each party provide all relevant records to the opposing legal counsel. Once this petition has been made it no longer matters that the records could have been destroyed. If the records have not been destroyed they must be provided. If either of the litigants does not fulfill this obligation, it will result in a summary finding against them. By destroying records according to a set schedule, a company appropriately limits the amount of materials it must search through to comply with this law.

From a risk management perspective, the only acceptable method of discarding stored records is to destroy them by a method that ensures that the information is obliterated. Documenting the exact date that a record is destroyed is a prudent and recommended legal precaution.



SHRED THE RIGHT WAY!

Even when organizations shred for the right reasons, some practices may promote the appearance of impropriety.

Thankfully, there are ways to minimize the risk:

SHRED on a regular schedule – sporadic shredding can be misconstrued as suspicious;

Use your shredding contractor for ALL of your shredding – if some documents go to your shredding contractor on a regular basis, and others are shredded outside of that process, it may draw attention to that activity;

Treat all documents equally...SHRED everything – isolating special records for destruction could lead to the conclusion that those documents were treated differently for the wrong reason. NEVER let some records go in the trash, while others are shredded;

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The information presented in this newsletter was provided by the National Association for Information Destruction (NAID) through “The Risk Management Series” from an article on Information Disposal.



SHRED THE RIGHT WAY!

Have a destruction policy — if it explains the what, why, when, and how of your destruction practices, a stated policy will minimize any hint of impropriety.

Canada FileSafe Inc. can provide assistance in developing an appropriate retention schedule and through the use of our state-of-the-art software and bar-coding technology our employees can quickly and easily provide reports that show which boxes/records are due for destruction, find and pull those boxes from our shelves and destroy the records using our warehouse based industrial shredder.

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