



Records Retention and Disposal Schedule

.01 Policy

Pursuant to the Records Management Act of 1953 and Maryland Code, the Bladensburg Police Department establishes standardization of files and records through the Department.

.02 Terms

Public Record: The original copy of any documentary material that is made by a unit or instrumentality of the State government of a political subdivision or received by the unit or instrumentality in connection with the transaction of public business. This includes records or documents required by law to be filed with or kept by an agency of the State, county, or municipality.

Public records can be in any form and format (paper, microfilm, microfiche, electronic, etc.). Electronic records are records in computerized or machine-readable format, including but not limited to email, voice mail, agency web pages, databases, source data, and derived digital products, such as maps and electronic government publications. Depending on their content, electronic records can be either permanent or non-permanent records.

Public Information Act: The purpose of the Public Information Act is to provide the public with a broad right to access records that are in the possession of State, county, and local government agencies. The Act applies to all branches of Maryland State government, as well as local government.

Permanent Record: Public records which have been appraised by law, statute, rule, agency personnel and/or the State Archivist as having ongoing administrative, fiscal, legal, historical or other archival value. Permanent records must be transferred to the State Archives for preservation and permanent retention. Examples of permanent records include, but are not limited to: official correspondence that serves to document the origins, history, and accomplishments of an agency, agendas and minutes of official meetings, books of final entry and general ledgers, and external audits of the agency. An agency's retention schedule should (1) identify which records are permanent and (2) state how long permanent records need to be maintained at the

originating agency prior to transfer to the Archives. Records designated as permanent are permanent in any form or format. Electronic records designated as permanent must be maintained and transferred to the State Archives.

Non-Permanent Records: Public records with temporary value which may be disposed of after the passage of a specified period of time. Disposal criteria must be specified in an approved records retention and disposition schedule. Examples of nonpermanent records include personnel records and time sheets, purchase orders, agency reference copies of State laws and publications, agency reference copies of legislative audits, and draft agendas and unofficial minutes of meetings.

.03 Governing Legislation and Reference

Governing Legislation:

Records Management Act of 1953.

Maryland Code, State Government Article, §10-634, *et seq.*

Maryland Code, General Provisions Article, §§4-201 through 4-306, Inspection of Public Records.
28 CFR, Part 23.

COMAR 14.18.04.

Forms:

Records Retention and Disposal Schedule (Form 6719)

Agency Records Inventory (Form 6720)

Electronic Records Inventory (Form 6721)

Certificate of Records Disposal (Form 6722)

Pre-transfer Record Condition Assessment Form (Form 6723)

Preliminary Inventory Worksheet for Records Transfer (Form 6724)

Records Transmittal and Receipt (6725)

Reference:

General Order 235, Records and Reports.

Guide to Government Records, Maryland State Archives, <http://guide.mdsa.net/>

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.04 Procedure

Unless otherwise ordered, the provisions of this General Order are mandatory and shall apply to all elements of the Bladensburg Police Department.

A. Responsibility

The Support Services Commander has the overall responsibility for monitoring the creation, maintenance, and disposition of records. This responsibility includes, but is not limited to, the following specific items:

- Analyzing, developing, coordinating, and installing records management procedures, including filing procedures, to meet Department needs; and,
- Serves as liaison on all matters relating to records management.

Commanders responsible for the maintenance and use of records will ensure the approved filing system is implemented. The location of files will be left to the discretion of individual commanders. However, bulky files may be kept in binders, but must be properly labeled.

The objective in managing official records is to make them serve the purpose for which they were created as economically and efficiently as possible. This objective can be reached by constant adherence to the procedures established herein.

B. Guidelines for Filing

Do not file useless paper. Filing less has four primary advantages:

- Faster Retrieval
- Faster Filing
- Easier Disposal
- Saves space, equipment, and supplies

Do not file extra copies of:

- General Orders, Memorandums, Special Orders, Personnel Orders, and other internal directives;
- Reproduced documents used in the suspense or tickler file as a reminder to complete an action. Ledgers should be utilized for accountability; and,
- Incoming correspondence commonly known as the "courtesy copy."

Required records are the "official files" of the Department, which should be completely separated from the "unofficial files."

The "official files" are those files which actually document the functions and responsibilities of the Department. These include:

- Fiscal;
- Administration;
- Law Enforcement Operations;
- Legal, Personnel Administration; and,
- Other related files as itemized in the filing system.

"Unofficial files" consist of copies of printed or reproduced pamphlets, magazines, technical reports, and related publications maintained by choice, as a source of useful information. These publications are not listed in the filing system because they often involve numerous subjects and cannot be categorized under any specific topic. They may, in fact, be disposed of at the pleasure of an employee.

C. Eliminate Extra Copies

- Creation of extra copies should be limited to those which will be of significant value to the Department and only when the responsibility for their maintenance can be firmly established.
- Some ways to minimize the creation and receipt of extra copies are as follows:
 - Review and trim the distribution lists for correspondence and other papers dispatched from the unit;
 - Discontinue sending extra copies unless there is a known need; and,
 - Request to be removed from the distribution list, if information copies are routinely received from a particular office which do not concern your operation.
- Most duplicate files are maintained merely for convenience; seldom are they essential to the operation of the Department. Duplicate files kept at various locations within an office may seem efficient, but they are costly to maintain and can be misleading because they do not always contain a complete case history or sufficient background data necessary to make sound decisions. Furthermore, duplicate files can often undermine the main files.
- Review of publications received and request deletion from the mailing list of those not pertinent to the functions of the Department.

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D. Filing Systems and Arrangements

Case files are the simplest and easiest of all to maintain and constitute the largest single type of file maintained by the Department. They consist of groups of file folders arranged in numerical, alphabetical, chronological, or geographical sequence. Each group generally containing the same types of papers which tend to document an action from the beginning to the end.

Since the primary functions and responsibilities of the Department are enforcing the law and the apprehension and arrest of criminals who violate the law, it is understandable why over 90% of Department records are case records. It is for these apparent reasons that particular attention should be given to planning, designing, and maintaining case filed records.

Technical reference files consist of printed reports, publications, manuals, law enforcement magazines, sales literature, specification manuals, supply catalogs, digests, and similar reproduced or printed materials kept in the office only as a source of useful information.

After carefully selecting publications pertinent to an office, adequate measures should be taken to organize and maintain them in a manner best suited to the needs of that office.

At least once a year, screen the file to remove:

- All rescinded and obsolete materials.
- Material which has been included in another publication maintained by the office.
- Material of no informational value.

Use one of the following methods to arrange the file:

- SUBJECT arrangement if there are documents which can be grouped by broad subject topics, such as "Narcotics," "Weapons," or "Radar."
- SOURCE arrangement if there are reference materials from several sources and members request them by source, such as "Police Academy," "National Crime Bureau," or "Schools of Law."
- TITLE arrangement when members request documents by title, such as "Police Chief" or "FBI Digest."
- NUMBER arrangement when publications, such as catalogs, laws, and manuals are

identified and requested by number.

Use standard folders for filing letter size and near letter-size documents which do not have identifying information on the spine.

Use binders for filing manuals, and other publications which are changed and updated through the issuance of new pages.

E. Files Maintenance

The simplest and most convenient method of carrying out records disposition is to "cutoff" or "break" each file regularly and start a new file.

A files cutoff system:

- Prevents the accumulation of files beyond actual current needs.
- Prevents growth of files into cumbersome, unmanageable collections.
- Simplifies the retirement and destruction of records on blocks.
- Facilitates reference to current files, and restricts the requirements for additional space and equipment.

Case files may be cut off at the termination of a transaction. For example, when an investigation has been completed and the case finally adjudicated, the folder(s) can be marked with the date of termination and placed apart from open cases. This applies to files which are designated with open and closed provisions only.

Chronological sequence files, such as accounting and fiscal, are easy to cut off since they are initially filed by fiscal or calendar year. At the time of cut off:

- Move the files to an inactive files area until they can be transferred to destroyed in accordance with the applicable records retention schedule.
- Prepare new folders for the current year.

A change out record will be made and substituted for all documents removed from the file for reference purposes. Information entered on the change out record is used for locating the document when it is removed from the drawer. When the documents are returned to the drawer, the entries are lined out and the record is available for reuse.

While guide cards are the principal file signposts, drawer labels and folder labels also help to find or file faster in the right folders.

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- Drawer labels narrow the search to one drawer.
- Guide labels narrow the search to several folders.
- Folder labels narrow the search to the contents of one folder.
- Labels should be in large type and colored if possible, to help identify separate files. Captions should be accurate and complete to identify the contents.

The file drawer is usually the first label read and should show:

- The file title;
- Years covered and the segment of the file included in the drawer; and,
- A distinction between active and inactive files.

The second label usually needed is a guide label which should show the contents of the folders which follow. In many instances this label will be identical to the label on the first folder behind the guide.

- For numbered case files, guide labels should reflect numeric breakdowns of the file at regular intervals, perhaps at every group of 10 numbers.
- For alphabetical files, guide labels are not needed for each letter of the alphabet, but they should be placed at intervals to identify the largest and most used collection of folders, and show the file code, as well as the topic.

The entire file system is designed and planned to direct the member speedily to one folder. If the label on the folder does not completely and exactly identify the contents, even the best files system falters. A good folder label should reflect in no more than three typewritten lines:

- The specific name;
- Letter;
- Geographic location;
- Topic;
- Number, code or symbol identifying exactly the contents of that folder;
- If folders are broken down in chronological order, indicate the segment kept in each particular folder.

F. Records Transfer Procedures to State Archives

The Archives have four facilities for the storage of permanent records, the Hall of Records in Annapolis and adjunct warehouses in Glen Burnie, Linthicum and Hanover. Lack of space in the Annapolis facility means that most record transfers must be housed in the warehouses.

Preparing Records for Transfer

Boxes or volumes should be clearly identified with the information contained in the inventory worksheet. If preliminary inventories received are not in an acceptable format, the transferring agency will be liable for the cost incurred by Archives staff for conversion to an acceptable format.

The descriptions of records should be at the unit level, one record entry for each box or volume to be transferred. The description should be sufficient to facilitate retrieval of the materials: series title as designated by the records retention schedule, box or volume number, date of contents, and file numbers or general description of contents. All descriptions of materials shall be furnished before the records are transferred.

Bound volumes require no additional containerization for transfer to the Archives. Flat files must be boxed using one cubic foot capacity record center boxes available from Maryland Correctional Enterprises (formerly State Use Industries), (410)540-5454. **DO NOT OVER-FILL BOXES** when packing. Materials received in containers not compatible with Archives shelving will not be accepted and will be returned to the transferring agency at its expense.

Arranging for the Transfer

Before Records transfers can occur the Records Condition Assessment Form and Preliminary Inventory Worksheet Form must be submitted electronically, as an email attachment. Submit these forms to: msa.helpdesk@maryland.gov

The Archives will solicit estimates from vendors familiar with transporting records. The transferring agency is responsible for all costs for delivery and shelving of records.

G. Destruction of Records

All records and files will be listed on a records and retention schedule.

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Members will use discretion and good judgement in determining the method of destruction. As a general rule, records and files considered sensitive or confidential in nature, such as applicant and investigation files, should be shredded or burned. Complete a Certificate of Records Disposal.

Determining the Volume of Records

The volume (cubic feet) disposed of is calculated as follows:

Container	Cubic Feet
Letter size file drawer	1.5
Legal size file drawer	2.0
Lateral 36" wide file drawer	2.0
Letter size 12" open shelf	1.0
18" thick 8.5" x 11" computer printout	1.0
10" thick 14.5 x 11" computer printout	1.0
Single Book	.5
Records Center Box	1.0

HISTORY: Adopted December 1, 2013. Revised January 20, 2015.

This General Order supersedes all other orders and memoranda in conflict therewith.

Authority:



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Chief of Police