

Transitory Records

Transitory records are government records that:

- have short-term use only and do not need to be filed or saved
- are produced or received in the course of routine actions, in the preparation of other records that replace them, or for convenient reference
- are not needed as evidence of an activity, decision, or transaction
- can be paper or electronic
- can normally be deleted or destroyed immediately

Clear examples of transitory records include:

- messages with simple acknowledgements or confirming short-term arrangements (e.g. thanks for taking the time to meet; taxi ready at 5pm)
- alerts and notifications (e.g. check your email; meeting about to start; retirement party invites)
- spoiled sheets (from printers, photocopiers, etc.), old or unused government forms, etc. that have not been filed as records to the office filing system
- routine messages such as notices “to all staff,” requests for meetings, training opportunities, news releases, etc.

Other kinds of records are more nuanced and can only be determined as *transitory* once program areas identify what records *are needed* as evidence of business activities.

Examples requiring more consideration include:

- Preliminary drafts or working notes. In some cases, it is necessary to retain these as evidence of the evolution of a final document or of the decision-making process.
- Duplicate copies distributed for reference use or sent to multiple recipients. Copies may need to be kept in one or more recordkeeping systems. For example, they may be needed to understand related records, show evidence of activities, or provide context.
- Duplicate copies maintained for convenience (i.e., paper and digital copy). Copies in other formats may be needed to mitigate risk.
- Emails. Many emails provide evidence of business activities and must be captured as evidence, but we also send/receive many transitory emails as well. Understanding the context of the email is key to knowing what to keep and what is transitory.
- Texts. Texts and instant messages should be limited to transitory exchanges; however, there may be situations where they need to be kept because they document decisions or actions.

Records that provide evidence of government business are, by definition, not transitory.

When in doubt – keep a record and capture it in a recordkeeping system.

Destruction of transitory records

As with all government records, destruction of transitory records is permitted only by authority of an approved records schedule.

Every department and agency has a records schedule for transitory paper records called “Non-filed Office Paper.” The schedule may be used at any time to transfer non-filed office paper to the Government Records Centre for destruction. See [Procedure GRO 2: Transferring Government Records](#).

Electronic transitory records are often kept in digital workspaces (e.g. email boxes, personal drives) for convenient reference and re-use. Once they are no longer needed, they should be deleted. The government-wide General Records Schedule GRS 0001A authorizes employees to delete these transitory records.

Unauthorized destruction of records as transitory

Unauthorized destruction, damage, removal, or concealment of government records, or counselling others to take such actions, is prohibited under section 28 of [The Archives and Recordkeeping Act \(ARA\)](#), and may be subject to prosecution, with offence penalties up to \$50K.

Examples of unauthorized destruction include:

- Use of a transitory records schedule to destroy government records that were kept as evidence in a recordkeeping system. This is true even if the records are no longer needed. The correct records schedule for the records must be used. This will provide evidence that the records were properly retained and managed.
- Use of a transitory records schedule to destroy government records that have not been scheduled. If no records schedule exists for the records, they must be maintained until an approved records schedule is in place.
- Use of a transitory records schedule to destroy paper records that have been digitized. Consult [Digitizing Records](#) for guidance on the appropriate management of paper source records.

For more information see:

[Identifying Government Records](#)

[Creating and Capturing Records](#)

[Text and Instant Messages](#)

[Managing Records in the Manitoba Government](#)

[Records Management Checklists for New and Exiting Employees](#)

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