

State of Wisconsin  
Department of Natural Resources  
Manual Code 9523.1 – Records Management

  
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Ed Eberle, Assistant Deputy Secretary

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Date

Rescinds and Replaces: 02/01/2016  
Division: Internal Services

Approved by OMT: 01/08/2016  
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**I. SCOPE**

The purpose of this manual code is to ensure compliance with applicable statutes and codes and to promote consistency in the management of all Department of Natural Resources records. This manual code applies to all department records and employees. Detailed procedures are further specified in the Records Management Handbook, 9520.5.

**II. POLICY**

All employees are responsible for complying with the requirements of our department's records management procedures. All records created, received or which the department is required by law to maintain, regardless of media, are the property of the state and shall be managed effectively as business resources throughout their life cycle.

The department shall maintain, preserve and dispose of records in accordance with all records laws and RDAs, as approved by the Public Records Board.

This policy does not include information on Open Records. See Manual Code 9521.1 "Open Records."

**III. DEFINITIONS**

**"Public Record"** means all books, papers, maps, photographs, films, recordings, optical disks, electronically formatted documents or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made, or received by any state agency or its officers or employees in connection with the transaction of public business, ..." [§ [16.61\(2\)\(b\)](#), Wis. Stats.].

**"Record"** means "any material on which written, drawn, printed, spoken, visual or electromagnetic information is recorded or preserved, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which has been created or is being kept by an authority. "Record" includes, but is not limited to, handwritten, typed or printed pages, maps, charts, photographs, films, recordings, tapes (including computer tapes), computer printouts and optical disks.

"Record" does not include drafts, notes, preliminary computations and like materials prepared for the originator's personal use or prepared by the originator in the name of a person for whom the originator is working; materials which are purely the personal property of the custodian and have no relation to his office; materials to which access is limited by copyright, patent or bequest; and published materials in the possession of an authority other than a public library that are available for sale, or that are available for inspection at a public library." [§ [19.32\(2\)](#), Wis. Stats.]

“RDA” means Records Retention/Disposition Authorization also known as Records Disposal Authorization. RDAs are scheduling statements for specific records that provide information as to the record content, format, length of retention and disposition at the end of the record’s life cycle.

#### **IV. PROCEDURE**

##### **Assignment of Records Management Responsibilities**

Each department employee is responsible for complying with records management requirements in performing day-to-day functions. Employees should follow records management responsibilities listed below.

##### **A. Legal Custodian of Records**

By statute, the legal custodian of all department records is the Secretary. The Secretary has appointed persons in the following positions as legal custodians of all records under their supervision:

- Division administrators
- Secretary’s directors
- Bureau directors

Legal custodians may further delegate custody of records to employees holding positions that have custody of records. The legal custodian is ultimately responsible for all record keeping decisions and compliance with all record laws and requirements.

##### **B. Records and Property**

Maintain, manage and file public records, including email records, as the property of the state, not as personal property, and pass records on to successors. Maintain records in accordance with the disposition requirements of the RDA. Do not destroy records unless the Public Records Board has approved the RDA.

##### **C. RDA Policy and Procedures**

As necessary, develop RDAs for Public Records Board approval within one year after each record series is created or received. Work with department Records Officer and program records coordinators.

##### **D. Retention of Departing Employees Records**

It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure that departing employee’s records are maintained. Contact your Information Technology Coordinator (ITC) or Regional Information Management Specialists (RIMS), as appropriate, for assistance. See [\*Standard Operating Procedure: Staff Leaving a DNR Program or Agency\*](#) for additional information.

##### **E. Department Records Officer**

The Records Officer has overall records management program responsibilities to ensure that the department manages records in compliance with records laws and requirements. The Records Officer ensures agency compliance with retention schedules, and also ensures agency compliance with retention obligations in Executive Order 189. The Records Officer attends meetings of the Records Officer Council and keeps apprised of actions of the Public Records Board. The Records Officer also provides technical assistance and guidance in all areas of managing records, including policies and procedures, records series inventory, personally identifiable information, RDAs, record practices, training, and filing.

- **RDAs:** Manage the RDA development and approval processes, involve the program records coordinators, submit the draft RDA to the Public Records Board for approval, and maintain a centralized file of all approved department RDAs.
- **Policies and Procedures:** Establish records management policies and procedures, including a department Records Management Handbook.
- **Personally Identifiable Information:** Identify procedural requirements for collecting, using, and releasing personally identifiable information that can be associated with a particular individual [§ 15.04(1)(m) and 19.35(1)(am), Wis. Stats.] for records coordinators and other staff.

#### **F. Program Records Coordinators**

Some programs appoint records coordinators to coordinate records management issues and concerns within the work unit and to maintain effective communications with the Records Officer and others. Coordinators cannot be expected to perform all record keeping functions in the unit. Each records coordinator shall assist in the following activities and shall be responsible to the legal custodian of records for the following.

- **Records Management Handbook:** Direct unit personnel to the Records Management Handbook, all records management manual codes, state records management guidelines, and standards.
- **RDA Policy and Procedures:** Ensure that RDA policies are established for all records (paper and electronic), and coordinate unit compliance with RDAs. Maintain RDAs for program records and make them available for others to use.
- **Storing Records:** Coordinate "off-site" storage and disposition of records at the State Records Center or other appropriate storage facility. Maintain an inventory of program records sent to off-site storage.
- **Public Notice:** Ensure that each DNR location displays a public notice as required under § [19.34\(1\)](#), Wis. Stats. The notice provides policies, procedures and costs for inspecting or obtaining copies of department records.
- **Records Projects:** Facilitate audits and feasibility studies of record keeping practices, including manual filing systems, use of office space, records work flow and processing, and transfer of records to alternative formats (i.e., optical disk, microfilm, electronic applications) as needed.

#### **G. Bureau of Legal Services**

Attorneys in the Bureau of Legal Services provide legal advice and assistance for the records management program:

- **Policies:** Review and approve all policies and procedures.
- **Records Retention/Disposition Authorizations:** Review, revise, and approve draft RDAs before they are submitted to the Public Records Board.