

INTRODUCTION

ELECTRONIC RECORDS: E-MAIL MANAGEMENT TIPS

[Image: a Microsoft Outlook inbox, with the folder list and top navigation showing, but the message list replaced with a flattened image of Earth's globe, with a computer screen and a smartphone floating in front of it. Envelopes are depicted flying out of the computer screen to indicate traveling e-mails.]

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WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT E-MAIL? - 1

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: envelope with a paperclip attached]

The most important thing for government employees to learn and remember about e-mail is that - just like a pile of letters on your desk.

Most of your e-mails:

- are public records, subject to Oversight Committee on Public Records approved Records Retention Schedules
- won't all be covered by the same Record Series (category and set of records retention rules), because they're not all about the same topic
- need to be sorted and filed efficiently, so you can find them when you need them and get rid of them when it's legal to do so.

[Image: (3 images) Close-up of a e-mail inbox folder list, then a large = sign, then a pile of colored envelopes]

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WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT E-MAIL? - 2

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: silhouette of human head, with internal shading formed from a maze/puzzle]

This means that you must consider and file the e-mails in your Inbox and Sent Messages just as you would that stack of paper letters on your desk:

[Image: flowchart containing the items bullet-listed below]

Initial Question: Is it a Public Record?

- 1) NO - It's not a Public Record. It's personal e-mail / reference or advertising material / a copy; I was one of many recipients.
 - a) Delete your copy when no longer useful.
- 2) YES - It's a Public Record.

a) Were you the sender?

i) YES - I was the sender.

(1) You are responsible for retaining the e-mail.

(a) File it in a folder that identifies its subject and Record Series.

(b) Follow the retention instructions for that Record Series.

ii) NO - I was not the sender.

(1) Did you forward it to someone else because it was about their job duties, not yours?

(a) YES - I forwarded the e-mail.

(i) Delete your copy when no longer useful.

(b) NO - I did not forward the e-mail.

(i) You are responsible for retaining the e-mail.

1. File it in a folder that identifies its subject and Record Series.

2. Follow the retention instructions for that Record Series.

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FILING TIP: SEARCH AND SORT - 1

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: magnifying glass]

SEARCH: Use your e-mail client's search functions to quickly weed out personal e-mails, newsletters/spam, and e-mails that are work-related, but are not public records:

- Example: a co-worker or friend often sends you invitations to lunch via e-mail. These are personal e-mails and should be deleted as soon as you don't need them anymore. Search by that person's name to quickly find and remove those invites.
- Example: you receive many e-mails about wellness or other health programs. For the recipient, these would fall into the category of advertising or newsletters; you can delete them as soon as you no longer need the information. Search by the sender name, or by words that consistently appear in the subject line, to group all of those messages together for easy deletion.
- Example: you are subscribed to a professional mailing list. While those messages can contain useful information for your job, they're not created as part of doing your job, so they're not public records. Search by the e-mail address of the mailing list, and delete any e-mails that you no longer need for reference.

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: an A above a Z, followed by a down arrow]

SORT: Use your e-mail client's sort functions to quickly group similar e-mails for easier weeding or filing:

- **Example:** your supervisor sends you a mix of work-related e-mails that are public records, and non-record e-mails like meeting invites and information about the staff picnic. Search by your supervisor's e-mail address to quickly gather all messages together, then sort by subject to gather the non-records together for deletion.
- **Example:** your co-worker usually only e-mails policy changes needing your approval (a public record), but sometimes also sends you a copy of the final, approved policy. For you, this is not a record, since you're not the custodian of the original. Search by that co-worker's e-mail address, then sort by subject and delete the final policy copies.
- **Example:** Your agency's HR contact tends to send you both informational e-mails for all employees with brochures attached, and individual communications about your FMLA leave. Search by their e-mail address and sort by attachment to find the messages that don't relate specifically to you, and free up space by deleting those unneeded larger files.

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: a blue envelope with a clipboard containing a To-Do list sticking out of it]

Rules are instructions you can give to your e-mail client, telling it to look for e-mails that fit the criteria you list and do something with them.

For instance, it could automatically move them from your Inbox to another folder, forward them to another person, or label them as High Importance. The Rule pictured here tells MS Outlook to find any notification messages with "a page has been edited" in the subject line, and send them straight to the trash.

[Image: Screenshot of the MS Outlook Account Information page, with the Rules and Alerts popup in front of it, showing a Rule Description of "Apply this rule after the message arrives - with 'a page has been edited in the Subject' - move it to the Deleted Items folder - and stop processing more rules."]

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: pile of colored envelopes, with arrows pointing off to the right in many directions]

If you know someone always sends a certain kind of e-mail, or that messages with a certain subject can all be treated in the same way, you can use Rules to make your life easier.

- Example: you want to read the Torch and similar state employee activity bulletins, but you don't always have time to look at them right away, and the e-mails are starting to clutter your Inbox. It's difficult to find what you need and to delete what you don't. Create a Rule that sends everything from the sender's address to a Read Later folder. Clean out the folder at the end of the week.
- Example: your co-worker sends you a lot of informational e-mails that you like to keep temporarily, but then delete when you no longer need them. Set a rule for all these messages to go to a Reference Materials folder, and then clean it out monthly.
- Example: your supervisor sends Weekly Team Goals e-mails on Mondays. Create a Rule that automatically labels those as High Importance to catch your attention when you're reading through your Inbox.

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FILING TIP: MANAGE SUBSCRIPTIONS

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: purple envelope with a sheet sticking out of it that reads "Newsletter"]

Regularly check your subscriptions to mailing lists, bulletins, and other similar services, and maintain only those that are relevant to your work.

- Example: a popular Food Network show posts the recipes from each week's episode to an e-mail list shortly after it airs. Bake all the delicious pastries you like, but don't subscribe to this list with your work e-mail.
- Example: the federal government agency that funds your program posts bi-weekly e-mail bulletins about new rules and how to apply them. This is work-related and it's fine to receive these at your work address. (Though it's not a State of Indiana record, so you can delete it when it's no longer useful.)
- Tip: keep a reference list of all mailing lists you subscribe to, and periodically evaluate their value to your work. Unsubscribe from any you no longer find useful.
- Tip: create a Rule that routes all of your list-mail to separate folders for easy management. (This can also serve as your reference list of all subscriptions!) You can clean out the messages that are already in your Inbox, too, by checking "Run this rule now..."

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FILING TIP: DON'T FORGET SENT-MAIL!

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: line art of a closed envelope with movement-lines to the left of it, indicating Sent mail]

Your Inbox isn't the only place where e-mails pile up. Just like you'd keep a copy of any paper letters you send out as part of your job, your e-mail client keeps a copy of any electronic messages you send.

The e-mails in your Sent Messages folder are just as important to sort and file as the messages in your Inbox, whether they're brand new creations or replies to someone else.

In fact, once you clear out the personal messages, the rest of your sent-mail will be almost all work-related. No spam in there, and if there are any bulletins, advertisements, or mailing-list messages, they'll be ones you created and thus are responsible for retaining according to the appropriate Records Retention Schedule.

Have no fear, though! The Search and Sort tips provided here work just as well for your Sent Messages folder as they do for your Inbox.

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FILING TIP: FOLDERS

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: line of colored folders, with each one placed slightly to the right and and down, so they appear filed]

Once you've weeded down your Inbox and Sent Messages to only the records that you need right now or are required to retain, you'll need somewhere to put them.

The folders you create and the structure in which you place them are all-important for being able to find what you need, and clean out what you don't.

- Tip: Create folders and subfolders based on your job duties and workflow, but try to match those up with the categories on your agency retention schedule and the General Retention Schedule for all agencies whenever possible.
- Tip: You don't need to create a folder for every Record Series - just the ones for which you regularly receive e-mail.
- Tip: Consider including either the retention period or the Record Series Number in the folder's name for easy identification and faster clean-up. For example:
 - Program Information Requests (GRADM-4)
 - Program Information Requests (3 years)
- Tip: Create Reference folders within your subject folders if you have related non-record materials. Clean those out regularly to remove items that are no longer useful.

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FILING TIP: REGULAR CLEANING

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: cartoon of a red bucket, with a mop with a green head leaning against it and a purple-and-white hand-vacuum in front of both, on a green oval floor spotlight]

This is the most important tip. No one likes doing it, but regularly cleaning up your e-mail is the best way to manage it. Depending on your work habits and volume of e-mail, you might want to do this

- o as soon as e-mails arrive
- o daily
- o weekly
- o monthly
- o quarterly
- o any combination of these that works best for you and your job duties

1) Example: you may wish to use your Inbox as a To-Do List, sorting and file new e-mails as soon as they arrive, so that only those that still require action on your part remain in the Inbox.

Example: if you have to write a monthly activity report for yourself or your division, you may want to wait until the end of the month to clean out your sent-mail. You can sort it by recipient or subject, weed out the personal e-mail and other non-records, and use the remaining information to create your report!

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THE BOTTOM LINE

[Image: Small, upper right corner of page: blue arrow pointing down to a horizontal line]

While we hope all of the tips we've provided here will help make it easier to file, find, and legally dispose of your government e-mail, the two most important pieces of e-mail management advice we can give you are:

1. Find a strategy that works best for YOU, because that will give you:
 - a. the most success at finding the e-mails you need
 - b. the least time spent cleaning out the e-mails you don't need anymore.
2. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Nobody was born knowing how to read a Records Retention Schedule. (Not even your friends at IARA!) If you get stuck trying to figure out which Record Series applies to a particular type of e-mail, you can always get for more

information from:

- a. your Agency Records Coordinator: www.IN.gov/iara/2737.htm
- b. IARA's State Records Management Division: rmd@iara.IN.gov
- c. IARA's Electronic Records Management Program:
erecords@iara.IN.gov

Closing Page: THANK YOU

[image: panoramic photo of the Indianapolis skyline including the Capitol building, with the sun behind it, and a superimposed graphic of two envelopes with diagonal arrows in front of and behind them, pointing opposite directions]

Thank you for taking our course on E-Mail Management Tips for Indiana Government Employees.

For more in-depth information (including additional training options), please visit our website at iara.IN.gov.