ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF AN EFFICIENT RECORDS STORAGE FACILITY

New York State Unified Court System
Division of Court Operations
Office of Records Management

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ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS FOR AN EFFICIENT RECORDS STORAGE FACILITY

PURPOSE OF THIS PAMPHLET:

Court records are a necessary part of court operations. They protect the rights of the public and document the social and legal past of New York State. In order to establish good records management practices that will ensure court records are readily accessible and retrievable, some courts have considered storing their inactive records away from the courthouse. This often occurs when available on-site storage space for records has become detrimental to the integrity of the records and could result in the inefficient operations or poses a danger to the safety and will being of staff and litigants. After a court has reached the decision to store inactive records off-site, the courts often inquire, what things should they be looking for before using an off-site records storage facility. This pamphlet was developed by the Office of Record Management to address this issue. The pamphlet contains a list of essential items that should be considered which if used will result in providing the best care and retrieval of the stored inactive records.

HOW TO USE THIS PAMPHLET:

There is no preferred method of implementation; the most effective way to apply the suggested list of items depends upon the court's schedule to allocate time for the project, costs, available staff, and volume of the inactive records. Clerks are encouraged to apply the components of the suggested list in ways that will work for them. The list of essential components should only be used if it meets the requirements of the UCS' Records Management Policy #1.0 on Off-Site Storage of Court Records and retention requirements listed in the UCS' Records Retention & Disposition Schedules. The inactive records that are to be stored in an off-site storage facility should never have reached their retention requirements.

The list of essential components is separated into two topics. The first topic is what items should be considered if a court is selecting an off-site records storage facility. This topic is further broken down by categories such as location, physical structure of the building, records storage requirements, etc. The second topic describes what a court should consider if the off-site storage facility were to be built or if an existing building were to be renovated. The second topic also provides a list of essential items that would be needed such as the records management system, furniture, equipment and supplies that should be considered.

For Further Assistance: please call the Office of Records Management at 212-428-2875.

REWARDS FOR STORING INACTIVE RECORDS OFF-SITE:

The rewards for using an off-site storage facility for inactive records are many. Using an off-site storage facility will free up expensive file cabinet space on-site and allow additional space for storing active files at the court. It will lessen the crowding of active files and permit easier retrieval. It will reduce court staff time necessary for access and retrieval of active files, since there is less files to look through. It can decrease the chances of misfiling with less files being stored at the court. It can improve inactive records reference services because the inactive records will be found one location. It can increase efficiency of records disposition after files have reached their UCS' records retention requirements. It can avoid the purchase of costly new equipment for storing the inactive records at the court. It may also result in the possible sale of surplus file equipment that will no longer be needed, after the inactive records are transferred. And, with less file equipment needed on-site at the court, it will cut the costs of storing records on-site dramatically.

A. SELECTION OF AN OFF-SITE RECORDS STORAGE FACILITY:

Court records should be stored off-site only if the facility provides the appropriate environmental and records management resources for storing them. The choice of an appropriate facility for storing court records and for monitoring their condition is the responsibility of the courts and offices that created the records. In addition, the facility must comply with requirements of the UCS' Records Management Policy #1 on Off-site Storage of Court Records. The following list identifies the specific criteria that can be applied when selecting an off-site storage facility:

1. LOCATION...

- **provides infrastructure resources including telecommunication lines, electricity, water and sewer at a reasonable cost**
- **is conducive to providing efficient user services**
- **exists with adequate access and egress for trucks**
- **is available with twenty-four hour/day parking**
- **provides accessible loading docks**
- **is within reasonable driving distance to courts**

2. PHYSICAL EXTERIOR/INTERIOR STRUCTURES:

a) EXTERIOR OF THE BUILDING...

- **meets local building codes, seismic and hurricane standards**
- **is constructed with noncombustible or fire-resistant material**
- **has a leak-free roof, foundation with no cracks or damage, and a drainage system that takes wastewater away from the building**
- **is not located in close proximity to a water main**
- **is not located in a flood zone**

b) <u>INTERIOR OF THE BUILDING</u>...

- **provides separate areas for records storage and administrative functions**
- **has separate storage areas for different media types (paper, electronic, microfilm) with individual heat, ventilation, air condition (HVAC) controls**
- **meets all applicable building, fire, and safety codes**
- **provides separate climate control systems for records storage and staff**
- **meets or exceeds standards for ventilation and air exchange systems**
- **is wired for computer network systems for internal and external communications**
- **contains no dust, dirt, vermin, birds, mold, mildew, rodents or other environmental hazards to records**
- **provides an up-to-code electrical system and adequate outlets for all equipment**
- **does not share space with occupants who store combustible materials, food or industrial supplies**
- **has insulated and wrapped any existing water-carrying pipes**
- **provides use of a freight elevator for multiple floors**
- **is available with safe drinking water**
- **provides restrooms**
- **has a separate area with tables and chairs for researchers**
- **has clearly marked emergency exit doors**
- **contains heavy load capacity floor(s)**

- **provides a 24-hour security system (either manual or automated) linked to the local police and fire department**

- **has a zoned dry-piped sprinkler system (preferably with a 250°F to 300°F rating with independently activated heads) that is monitored 24 hours a day. The system should have a manual shut-off override**

- **contains circuit breakers in an accessible area and that is clearly identifiable in case of an emergency**

- **provides storage space for permanent records that is away from an outer wall**

- **has locked windows with safety/escape bars**

3. RECORDS STORAGE REQUIREMENTS:

a) TEMPERATURE AND HUMIDITY CONTROLS ...

- **are maintained for paper records at a temperature range of 70°F+/-2°F Daily fluctuations should be at minimum ±5% Humidity in a 24 hour period. Relative Humidity should be between 45-55% with a 2% maximum allowable daily fluctuation**

- **are maintained for Silver Halide and Diazo microfilm at a temperature range of 70°F+/2°F and a Relative Humidity of 20 - 30%. Daily fluctuations should be at minimum ±5% with a 2% Relative Humidity in a 24 hour period**
  (Silver and diazo microfilm should never be stored together.)

- **are maintained for electronic records at a temperature range of 62°F to 68° F with an optimum temperature 65° F and a Relative Humidity level of 35% to 45% with an optimum humidity of 40%**

- **should provide separate areas and HVAC controls for different media such as magnetic tapes, microfilm and/or paper records**

b) <u>SHELVING AND LIGHTING</u>...

- **is to be charted or drawn to scale before buying and installing any equipment, shelving or lighting fixtures. This chart should be maintained and up dated with any new changes**

- **is to be clearly labeled and identified by work function. For example: ADMINISTRATIVE, LOADING DOCK, RECORDS PROCESSING, RECORDS STAGING, MICROGRAPHICS, REFERENCE/RESEARCH AND RECORDS DISPOSAL AREAS**

c) <u>SHELVING INSTALLATION</u> should...

- **maximize the vertical space that is to be used for storing records**

- **be loaded to evenly distribute the weight of records**

- **contain standard open metal shelves, 18" gauge steel, 30" deep X 42" wide, that are placed back to back and anchored to the floor. High density shelving is desirable, if floor loading permits**

- **be designed so that the lowest shelf is at least 4 inches off the floor**

- **contain elevated catwalk for each aisle if the shelving units are double stacked. (For example: shelves that are 16 feet high.)**

- **provide pulpit-type step ladders with safety handrails to retrieve boxes placed on high shelves**

- **be designed with aisles that are 30" to 36" wide to allow sufficient room for a person with a records cart or pulpit-type step ladder to pass or turn**

- **pass a load capacity/stress test for areas that will be used for storing records on floors above ground. This test should be conducted by a structural engineer and should show that the floor is within building code to withstand the weight of shelves and boxes. The floor should have a minimum of 300 pounds per square foot for stacking 14 boxes high on shelves**

d) LIGHTING INSTALLATION...

- **should be located between the rows of shelves and not on top of the shelves**
- **of ceiling fixtures, between the rows, should be no lower than 12 to 19 inches above the height of the top shelf**
- **of florescent light is recommended, because it reduces glare, doesn't cast shadows and is the most energy efficient**
- **should include light filters to reduce glare and to protect records from damage caused by ultra violet rays**

e) VAULTS, if available, ...

- **should be used for storing vital and confidential records**
- **should be fire resistant, waterproof and heat resistant**

4) FACILITY DESIGN should, if possible, include the following:

a) RECORDS PROCESSING AREA should...

- **be utilized for returned files, interfiles or making boxes**
- **be easily accessible from the loading dock, the stacking area and administrative area**
- **contain doorways and aisles that are wide enough to accommodate easy passage of records material handling equipment**
- **be furnished with a work table**

b) <u>RECORDS STAGING AREAS</u> should...

- **be used as temporary areas for stacking record boxes which have been delivered but not yet shelved and for stacking records retrieved in preparation for customer delivery**
- **be located next to the loading dock**
- **contain doorways and aisles that are wide enough to accommodate easy maneuvering of records material handling equipment**

c) <u>RECORDS DISPOSAL AREA</u>...

- **is a temporary waiting and pickup area for accumulating records which are about to be disposed**
- **should be separated from other record activity areas**
- **used for destroying or shredding records on-site, should contain air ventilation/exchange systems and a sound proof acoustic dimension**

d) <u>REFERENCE/RESEARCH AREA</u> should...

- **be provided and separated from the records storage areas**
- **be designed large enough to accommodate the projected number of researchers that will be using the facility. The projected number of researchers can be determined by evaluating the average number of requests received for inactive records in one day**
- **contain a worktable for reading records, a copy machine, a reader printer for microfilm, and enough outlets to permit the use of laptop computers at tables**
- **have the capability of being locked by key to limit access while not in use**
- **contain a coat closet or lockers for patrons**

- should contain security checkpoints near the exit for inspections, etc. when patrons are leaving

5. **LOADING DOCK...**

- should be within close proximity of records storage areas
- must be wide enough to accommodate freight vehicles for loading and unloading storage cartons
- must be separate from the storage area by a 4 hour fire wall with proper fire protection

6. **SECURITY...**

- must be provided by making sure all doors are locked and the distribution of keys are limited to only authorized personnel. The Key system must be based on master lock system
- should always be continuous in the case of power failure or emergency, the facility should contain an emergency override switches
- should assure that all windows are locked

7. **TRANSPORTATION can include the following items...**

- Small truck or mini van
- Hand trucks for record cartons
- Dollies

B. BUILDING OR RENOVATING AN OFF-SITE RECORDS STORAGE FACILITY:

If you are building a Off-site Records Storage Facility or renovating an existing Off-site Records Storage Facility, the following items should be considered: (The items that are described in this section should be considered with section A of this pamphlet.)

1. RECORDS MANAGEMENT SYSTEM should, if possible, ...

- **be an automated records management system that is compatible with the current court network systems, has internal network capability, covers all Records Center functions, and has complete reporting functions for box, file, account and security activities**

- **include hardware: including a high speed, large capacity computer(s) (including a backup system for recovery in case of a disaster). Laser printers, modems, and file servers**

- **list all authorized personnel and description of operational procedures of the facility in a Records Operational Procedures Manual. These procedures should include any record index, transfer and retrieval of records as well as disposition and destruction of records. This manual should contain up-to-date forms for all Records Center functions for example: transfer, return, and/or transmittal forms. And, the manual should include the facility's current Records Disaster Recovery & Protection Plan, Vital Records Protection Plan, and/or emergency procedures for the facility.**

2. **<u>FURNITURE, OFFICE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES</u>, that can be used for improving the facility's operations, include:**

- **Library carts**
- **Telephones**
- **Public announcement system (for a large area record center).**
- **Desk lamps**
- **Desk chairs**
- **Fax machines**
- **Bookshelves**
- **Computers and printers**
- **Copy machines**
- **File cabinets**
- **Scanners**
- **Computers**
- **Desks**
- **Tables**
- **Shredders**
- **Cleaning supplies/materials**
- **Supply cabinets**
- **Face dust masks**
- **Record Storage boxes**
- **Box labels**
- **File folders and labels**
- **Computer diskettes**
- **Diskette storage boxes**
- **Copier/Fax machine paper**
- **Work gloves**
- **Box tapes**
- **Three hole punch machines**
- **Staple guns and removers**
- **File charge-out cards**
- **Lab Coats**
- **Other General Office Supplies**

GLOSSARY OF RECORDS MANAGEMENT TERMS:

ACTIVE RECORDS
are any records that are referred to minimally once a month or more, but have not reached their approved legal records retention requirements as listed in a UCS Records Retention & Disposition Schedule. Active records are usually identified at the time that a records inventory is performed at a Court or OCA office.

ARCHIVES
is a special depository or storage facility for the preservation of special records or archival records that have reached their retention requirements or final disposition, but have continual or research value. An archives houses only records that have permanent retention. *See also:* Records Storage Facility.

DISPOSITION
is defined for most records as the destruction of a record after the record has reached its retention requirements that are listed in a UCS Records Retention & Disposition Schedule. For some records the final disposition could be when the record has exhausted it's retention requirements and the record contains continual or research value that warrants the record to be sent to an archives or permanent storage facility for preservation.

FILE INTEGRITY
is the maintaining of accuracy, completeness, and original order of the records in a filing system.

INACTIVE RECORDS
are any records that are referred to less than once per month but have not reached their approved legal records retention requirements as described in a UCS' Records Retention & Disposition Schedule. Inactive records are usually identified at the time that records are inventoried at Court or OCA office.

INDEX
is a manual or automated listing of obtained information taken from a record. The listing can be arranged either alphabetically, numerically, or a number of combinations to facilitate the retrieval or location of a record listed.

RECORD
is recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics. Examples of various mediums or characteristics are paper, microforms, computer hard disk, diskettes, magnetic tape, optical disk, facsimile, video tape, audio tape, etc.

RECORDS STORAGE FACILITY

is a separate facility or designated located area in a building that is utilized for the low-cost housing and organizing of and referencing of inactive records which are awaiting their destruction or transfer to an archives or permanent storage facility. A records storage facility is not a warehouse nor is it a dumping ground for records. A records storage facility provides a secure environment for storing of inactive records. A records storage facility makes use of lower cost space and file equipment. A typical records storage facility can be either a designated area of a building or separate building that is clean and utilizes steal shelving and standard size containers for paper records, microfilm, or magnetic media in a secure environment. *See also:* Archives.

RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSITION SCHEDULE

is a comprehensive list of records of a Court or Unit of the Office of Court Administration. A schedule specifies for each listed record the length of time that a record is to be maintained and destroyed, or when a record is to be maintained permanently.

RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

is a description of the legal period of time that a record must be retained. The retention period for each record of the Unified Court System (UCS) is established by the Division of Court Operations' Office of Records Management and is approved by UCS' Counsel's Office. The retention periods for a court or OCA unit are listed in a UCS Records Retention & Disposition Schedule.

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