

HOW TO USE THE COLORADO MUNICIPAL RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

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Terminology

Terminology that may be unfamiliar to some users is explained in *Appendix B - Glossary*.

Numbering System

The *Colorado Municipal Records Retention Schedule* is organized in individual schedules that group related records according to municipal functions. Each schedule is assigned a reference number, and an item identification number is assigned to each records title listed (i.e., 05.010 means Schedule 5, Item 010). The schedule and item identification numbers are listed with the individual records titles in the index - ***the key to locating records titles in the schedules.***

Record Titles and Description

Because the records titles used may not reflect the exact records titles used by everyone, the Retention Schedule provides a short paragraph that describes the use and typical contents of each records series and sub-series.

Retention Periods

Retention periods are based on legal requirements and/or on common usage and industry standards to meet typical administrative, operational or reference requirements. The retention time period indicates the minimum length of time that the **record copy** should be retained before disposal can take place. Typically, some kind of approval process is in place to authorize the destruction of records in accordance with the Records Retention Schedule. Evaluate records for continuing legal, fiscal, administrative or historical value and determine whether they are the subject of any legal holds before proceeding with the authorized destruction. It is permissible to either wait to destroy obsolete records until the end of the year in which they become eligible for destruction or to go ahead and destroy records at the end of the retention period. The municipality may dispose of duplicates in accordance with the following guidelines:

DUPLICATE COPIES CREATED FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PURPOSES

Retain for 1 year and then destroy.

DUPLICATE COPIES CREATED FOR CONVENIENCE OR REFERENCE

Retain until no longer needed for reference or 1 year, whichever is first, and then destroy.

Duplicate copies should not be retained longer than the record copy.

CRS 6-17-104 provides a default retention period of three years for records that state law requires to be retained when no retention period is otherwise specified.

The retention period applies to the information contained within the record, regardless of the physical format of the record (paper, microfilm, computer disk or tape, optical disk, etc.).

Guidelines for identification and handling of some non-records are discussed in *Appendix A - Non-Records*.

Trigger Dates

Trigger dates are included in retention periods whenever possible. A *trigger date* is the date of an event, action or cut-off point that begins the countdown to the end of the retention period. Examples of a trigger date in a retention period are highlighted in the following: "3 years **after expiration of the warranty**" and "1 year **after the tap is disconnected**." When a trigger date is not specified, the countdown to the end of the retention period begins on the date the file is closed, the date the file no longer has any administrative or reference value, or the date of the newest document in the file.

Another Records Retention Resource

In 2010, The Colorado Municipal Clerks Association published *Managing Municipal Records in Colorado: A RIM-ERM Toolkit* (known as the "Toolkit"). Colorado municipalities may find that publication to be of value in establishing and maintaining a viable records and information program, which includes adopting a records retention schedule. It is available through the CMCA Records Management Committee (contact information is listed on the CMCA website at www.cmca.gen.co.us).