Transitory Records

Information is considered transitory when it does not document decisions or work activities. Transitory information does not need to be saved in your recordkeeping system. This guide will help you identify and manage this information.

Why Managing Transitory Information Is Important

By promptly removing transitory information (also known as transitory records), employees are better able to identify and file key records into their recordkeeping system, where they can be easily found. As well, government avoids unnecessary costs for storing and processing transitory records.

Transitory records are covered by the Special Schedule for Transitory Records (schedule 102901). They do not need to be filed using the Administrative Records Classification System (ARCS) or your office’s Operational Records Classification System (ORCS).

Who can apply the Transitory Records schedule? You! The authority to identify transitory records is delegated to each BC government employee.

Transitory information can and should be disposed of when it is no longer of value, with one important exception: if a ministry receives an FOI or litigation search request, all relevant records must be provided, including transitory information that exists at the time of the request. Transitory information that is subject to such requests must be retained pending completion of the applicable FOI response process and review period or the applicable litigation activities (contact Information Access Operations and Legal Services Branch, respectively, for guidance on particular cases).

Use this guide and the Transitory Records schedule to determine whether the information is transitory.

Do NOT destroy any transitory information relevant to a FOIPPA request or legal discovery!

What is Transitory Information?

Transitory information is information of temporary usefulness that is needed only for a limited period of time in order to complete a routine action or prepare a final record. It can exist in any format or medium (paper or digital) and can be created and shared using a variety of technologies (e.g. email, social media, Skype for Business, SharePoint, wikis). Transitory information is not required for financial, legal, audit or statutory purposes and is not filed in the recordkeeping system.
RECORDS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

Examples of Transitory Records

- meeting arrangements
- personal messages
- cc copies (unless you are the main staff member responsible for the matter)
- copies created for convenience/reference purposes
- email conveying an attachment (providing it doesn’t add value to the attachment)
- simple messages reflecting commonplace interactions (e.g. a request to call someone)
- outlines, calculations, preliminary notes and other rough content used to prepare a final record
- drafts and revisions that are not needed to document decisions and associated approvals
- routine correspondence about drafts and revisions
- announcements of social events
- advertising material

See the Quick Reference Guide on the last page for more examples.

What is NOT a Transitory Record?

A record’s content and context determine whether it is transitory, not its format or storage medium. If an email, draft document, or other record is essential to understanding government business – e.g. how a particular decision was reached – then the record is not transitory and must be kept.

Non-transitory records need to be filed and saved in accordance with the appropriate information schedule (i.e. ARCS or ORCS).

Examples of non-transitory records

- work unit activities documentation (e.g. work schedules, assignments, etc.)
- useful information that helps explain the history of a relationship, decision, or project
- drafts or revisions with information about a decision or associated approvals that is unavailable elsewhere (e.g. directions to change a proposal and recommend a different course of action)
- final report with recommendations
- formal communication about official business
- policies and directives
- decision records, instructions, and advice
- meeting agendas and minutes
- documentation of a policy matter or how a case was managed
- documentation of initiation, authorization, or completion of business transactions
- documentation that is evidence of a significant action (e.g. verification or approval to proceed)

Government bodies must create and maintain adequate records of their decisions to meet their obligations under the Information Management Act. If your drafts contain important decisions, they must be saved in the appropriate recordkeeping system. For more information on the requirements to document government decisions see the Documenting Government Decisions guidelines.
# Quick Reference Guide to Transitory Information

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| **Records of Short-term Use** | Records created or received for informational purposes only; OR convenience copies for reference or ease of use (i.e. the original has been filed in the recordkeeping system). | • messages (e.g. email, voicemail, instant messages) that are not required to document a decision, action, or transaction  
• duplicate copies, partial copies or extracts no longer needed for reference purposes  
• input source documents no longer required |
| **Working Materials, Drafts, and Revisions** | Preliminary versions and supplementary documentation used to prepare a final document, which DO NOT indicate new decisions or provide approvals and are not specified in another information schedule (e.g. ARCS or your ORCS). | • drafts and revisions that do not provide information on decisions or approvals  
• rough notes, calculations, outlines, lists of ideas or suggestions  
• newspapers or magazines used for compiling daily ‘news clippings’ (physical or digital) |
| **Advertising and Promotional Material from the Private Sector** | Advertising and promotional material from businesses or business professionals which DOES NOT relate to a transaction with a private sector provider. | • company profiles, pamphlets  
• direct mail/email notices and bulletins  
• catalogues  
• free trial CDs and DVDs  
• course and seminar announcements |
| **Supplies of BC Government Publications and Blank Forms** | Stocks of publications and blank forms which have no further usefulness. | • blank forms, including blank e-forms and e-templates  
• blank stationary with out-of-date information  
• out-of-date published material (e.g. pamphlets, brochures, newsletters) |

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**Additional Information**

Contact your Records Team or check out the Records Management website.