

MANAGING GOVERNMENT RECORDS - MODULE 5

CLOSING AND BOXING FILES

This module helps you:

- Know when to close a file
- Understand how to box files for offsite storage or internal destruction
- Use the correct forms
- Retrieve boxes

Introduction

Well done! You now know what a record is, how to classify, how to create file folders and lists. You understand the life cycles of records. Now it is time to understand how to box files and send them to offsite storage or destroy them yourself.

Closing Files

The time has come for deciding which files need to be closed and sent to offsite storage or destroyed. This is often referred to as **Culling or Purging**. You will close all your calendar or fiscal year files. You might also be closing SO files where some event has occurred that triggers the closing of them (e.g., the contract has expired, the project is over, or the policy has been superseded by a new one).

If you are using an electronic records management system for managing your physical files (e.g., CRMS, or EDRMS (TRIM)), there are automated closing functions that help to simplify the process. The online help manuals for these systems will guide you through the closing process.

If you do not use an electronic records management system, you will need to read the retention for each file and determine for yourself if the active retention period is up. In [Module 3 Life Cycles of Records](#), you learned all about how to interpret retention periods. Refer back to that section if you need to.

Steps for Closing Files:

- You will need your current file list.
- Read the retention periods for each file and determine which files are ready to be closed. Enter the close dates on the file list and make note of which ones are still active (e.g., if the active retention is CY+2y this means the file will be closed, but will remain active for another two full calendar years).
- Pull all the closed files from the filing system.
- Enter the close dates on the file labels.

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- Return the "active closed" files back to the filing system. For these files put a coloured sheet of paper with the words "FILE CLOSED" at the top of the file to indicate it is closed. This will ensure records are not added to the file.
- You will now be left with files that will either be destroyed or sent to offsite storage.
- Create new files only if you are certain you will have records to put into them.

You are now ready to learn all about boxing files.

Boxing Files

As we learned in [Module 3 Life Cycles of Records](#), not all records are treated equally at the end of their life cycle. Many have no lasting value and will be destroyed; while others will be selectively or fully retained by the provincial archives. Some records will never be sent offsite because they have no semi-active periods and a final disposition of DE (destruction). That being said here are four simple rules that you must follow:

1. Separate out all DE records where the semi-active period is nil or the semi active period has expired. These should be destroyed internally. You will learn more about internal destructions as you move on through this module.
2. For files going offsite, do not box DE files with SR/FR files. DE's **MUST** go in their own box; this way when the semi-active period is up, the whole box can be destroyed.
3. Do not mix files in a box that are covered under different schedules.
4. Separate files that are covered under an approved schedule (e.g., *ARCS*) from those that have no schedule (e.g., draft *ORCS*). Records without an approved schedule are referred to as "unscheduled" and you use different forms to send those files to offsite storage. These cannot be destroyed until the schedule is approved.

Boxing files correctly the first time will save you time in the long run. Tips for boxing:

- When filling boxes, group files with similar type retentions and end/close dates.
- In a perfect world you would have boxes where the final disposition dates for all files occur at the same time. But we do not live in a perfect world; so try to box them so that final disposition dates are within a year of each other. For example, do not place a file that is being kept for two years in the same box as a file that should be kept for 10 years. Be aware that you may be asked to re-box the files, which can be a lot of additional work.

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Transferring Files to Offsite Storage

Now that you have your box of files ready to go; what next?

- Request an accession number by completing the [ARS653 form](#) from the Records Management webpage. This form will send an email to Records Centre Services (RCS), who will issue an accession number. An accession number is a six digit number that tracks your files in offsite storage (e.g., 94-1234).
- You will be issued a new accession for each successive group of boxes you send to offsite storage, unless you are transferring records under an ongoing accession number (OAN). OANs are issued to offices for records of the same type that are sent to storage on a regular basis. If you need more information on OANs, contact your [Ministry Records Management team](#).
- Label the boxes with the accession number. Do not put any other information on the outside of the boxes. Place a box content file list in each box. The labels can ONLY be purchased through [Office Products Center](#).
- Complete all the necessary forms and send them to **RCSHELP@gov.bc.ca** for processing.
- If you require help with completing the forms, please contact **RCSHELP**.
- Records Centre Services (RCS) will contact you, via e-confirmation, when the paperwork is approved.
- Follow the instructions on the e-confirmation.
- A Reply is required to confirm the boxes are labelled and ready.
- RCS will arrange for the pickup and transport of your boxes. It can be up to 5 business days for this to happen once RCS receives confirmation from you that boxes are ready.

Documentation Required to Transfer Records to Offsite Storage:

- ARS563 form
- Box Content File List (database generated or manual excel box content)

Destroying Files Internally:

Files eligible for internal destruction must meet all criteria below:

- No longer active.
- Semi-active period is nil.
- Final disposition is DE (destruction).
- Covered under an approved schedule.

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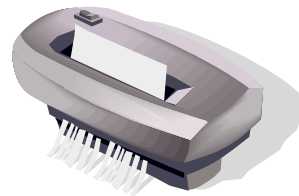
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Documentation for Internal Destructions:

- Records Destruction Authorization, ARS 653
- Box Content File List
- Form D – HLTH 3323 (indicates records have been checked for any tobacco related material)

If you have a large volume of records to destroy onsite you can use one of the corporate supply arrangements posted on the Procurement and Supply Services website under Record Destruction.

[Corporate Supply Arrangements for Records Destruction](#)



So what do you do if you want to retrieve a box?

Retrieving Boxes:

- If you need to recall a box or file from storage, refer to your paperwork for the appropriate accession case file, TRIM, CRMS, Ministry specific database or contact RCSHELP.
- Complete an offsite box request form (ARS 626) and e-mail it to the appropriate storage company.
- In the Greater Victoria and Vancouver areas the boxes will be delivered the next day. However, should you require a "Rush" you must advise them and the boxes will be delivered within two hours. Within the Victoria area there is no additional charge for the occasional rush.
- To return boxes to storage complete an offsite box return form (ARS 633) and e-mail it to the appropriate company. Boxes will be picked up the next time the courier is in your area. If they do not come in one week contact our office to let us know.
- Outside the Greater Victoria and Vancouver area boxes will be delivered within five working days or less. If you need a 'rush', e-mail your order in and provide the name of the courier company you wish to use plus your account number for billing purposes. When you send the boxes back you can use the 'house mail' or, if you prefer, the courier company.

[Click here](#) to access the records management forms mentioned above.

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Congratulations!

You have completed Module 5, Closing and Boxing Files.

Module 6 covers the challenges of managing electronic records. You will learn valuable tips and tricks and how you can manage electronic information more effectively. OK, let's finish up with [**Module 6: Managing e-Records**](#).