



INFORMATION DIRECTIVE PROCEDURES

Essential (Vital) Records Procedures	
EPA Classification No.: CIO 2155-P-01.1	CIO Approval Date: March 24, 2015
CIO Transmittal No.: 15-003	Review Date: March 24, 2018

*Issued by the EPA Chief Information Officer,
Pursuant to Delegation 1-19, dated 07/07/2005*

Essential (Vital) Records Procedures

1. PURPOSE

To identify specific requirements, processes and supporting documents EPA uses to manage essential records.

The term “vital records” was changed to “essential records” by the Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) *Federal Continuity Directive (FCD) 1* in October 2012.

2. SCOPE AND APPLICABILITY

These procedures cover all essential records and apply to all EPA programs, regions, labs and offices.

3. AUDIENCE

All EPA organizations, officials and employees, as well as contractors or grantees, and others operating on behalf of EPA.

4. BACKGROUND

Every federal agency is required by regulation to establish and maintain an essential records program. The essential records program is one element of the Agency’s emergency management and disaster preparedness and records management functions. EPA must identify and protect those records that specify how EPA organizations will operate in case of an emergency or disaster and those records essential to the continuing operations of the Agency.

5. AUTHORITY

- 36 CFR Part 1223 – Managing Vital Records
 - U.S. EPA – Records Management Policy (CIO 2155)
 - Federal Continuity Directive 1
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6. PROCEDURES

The following are required procedures to establish and maintain an essential records program:

- a. Identify essential records and prepare an essential records inventory.
- b. Develop and implement a plan for protecting and accessing the essential records.
- c. Update the inventory at least annually.
- d. Update essential records, as needed, and remove and destroy outdated copies.
- e. Certify the inventory and send the certification through senior management (e.g., Assistant Administrators, Regional Administrators) to the Agency Records Officer by October 1 of each year.
- f. Participate in continuity of operations (COOP) exercises and report results to management.

7. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- [Developing and Maintaining a Vital Records Program](#) March 2005
- [Records Management Manual](#) February 2007

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The following are the roles and responsibilities to implement the procedures:

- *Agency Records Officer* - coordinates the Agency's essential records program.
- *Assistant Administrators, Chief Financial Officer, General Counsel, Inspector General, Regional Administrators, and Laboratory/Center/Office Directors* - designate a Records Liaison Officer (RLO) who will implement an essential records plan within their organization.
- *RLOs* - coordinates identification, protection, certification and updating of essential records for their organization. RLOs collaborate with COOP planners to protect essential records and systematically review and test the plan and ensure essential records are accessible at designated COOP sites.
- *EPA employees, contractors and grantees, and others operating on behalf of EPA* - identify and protect essential records.

9. DEFINITIONS

- *Essential records* - Information systems and applications, electronic and hardcopy documents, references, and records needed to support essential functions during a continuity of operations event. The two basic categories of essential records are emergency operating records and rights and interest records. Emergency operating records are needed to respond to an emergency and for the continued functioning or reconstitution of an organization. Rights and interest records are critical to carrying out an
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organization's essential legal and financial functions and vital to the protection of the legal and financial rights of individuals who are directly affected by that organization's activities.

- *Essential records inventory* - A list identifying the records designated as vital or essential. It includes other identifying information such as where the records are located, who is responsible for them, when they are updated, and how to obtain access.
- *Essential records program* - The policies, plans and procedures developed and implemented and the resources needed to identify, use and protect the essential records needed to meet operational responsibilities under national security emergencies or other emergency or disaster conditions or to protect the government's rights or those of its citizens.

10. WAIVERS

Does not apply.

11. RELATED POLICIES, STANDARDS AND GUIDANCE

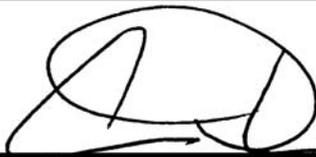
- [Continuity of Operations \(COOP\) Policy \(2030.1A\)](#)
- [National Security Emergency Preparedness Policy \(2040.1A1\)](#)
- [Interim Records Management Policy \(2155.2\)](#)

12. MATERIAL SUPERSEDED

CIO 2155.P-01.0: Vital Records Procedures, Dated 06/08/2009

13. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For questions about these procedures, please contact the Office of Information Collection, Office of Environmental Information, (202) 566-1630.



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