



SOP: Evaluation, Transfer and Destruction of Records at HQ

Transferring files to Archives for retention or destruction

Files at HQ which have long-term value according to WHO records retention schedules, but which are no longer needed for daily business, are transferred to the WHO Archives for permanent retention.

Files which must ultimately be destroyed according to WHO records retention schedules, and which are no longer needed for daily business, are transferred to the WHO Archives for storage until they reach the appropriate date for destruction.

Contact archives@who.int for evaluation of records before they are transferred, whether for permanent retention or for destruction. Evaluation is carried out by Records and Archives (RAS) staff according to the WHO records retention schedules.

A *Transfer of Inactive Files* form (WHO 545) is completed when transferring any files.

1. Complete the WHO 545 form, indicating the following (RAS staff will assist with this for those unfamiliar with the procedure):
 - originating unit
 - title and description of records
 - inclusive dates of records
 - volume of records in linear meters
 - records retention schedule number
2. Attach to the WHO 545 form a complete list of the files to be transferred.
3. Ensure that the WHO 545 form is signed and dated by the head of the originating unit. The form must also be signed and dated by the Head of RAS before transfer of the listed records takes place.
4. Once a copy of the signed WHO 545 form is returned to the unit, contact RAS to arrange for the delivery of records disposal boxes.
5. Place records in the records disposal boxes, removing any which are in binders. As far as possible, please remove paper-clips, plastic folders or other plastic and/or metal material.
6. Contact RAS for records pick-up by sending an email to archives@who.int.
7. To confirm the transfer, a copy of the signed WHO 545 form is sent to the unit.

Destruction of Records

Consult records retention schedule *#001 Transitory Records Administration*. External publications, duplicates, and drafts may be destroyed by units according to this schedule. The unit may directly recycle transitory non-confidential records. If there is confidential material among your transitory records, please contact Records and Archives (RAS) for secure shredding of these records.

Other records are destroyed in accordance with WHO records retention schedules.

A *Records Destruction* form (WHO 545) is completed when destroying any non-transitory files.

1. Complete the WHO 545, indicating the following (Records and Archives staff will assist with this for those unfamiliar with the procedure):

- originating unit
 - title and description of records
 - inclusive dates of records
 - volume of records in linear meters
 - scheduled destruction date
 - records retention schedule number.
2. Attach to the WHO 545 form a complete list of the files to be destroyed.
 3. Ensure that the WHO 545 form is signed and dated by the head of the originating unit. The form must also be signed and dated by the Head of RAS before destruction of the listed records takes place.
 4. Once a copy of the signed WHO 545 is returned to the unit, contact RAS to arrange for the delivery of records disposal boxes.
 5. Place records in the records disposal boxes, removing any which are in binders. As far as possible, please remove paper-clips, plastic folders or other plastic and/or metal material.
 6. Contact RAS for records pick-up by sending an email to archives@who.int.
 7. To confirm that the destruction took place, the RAS staff member responsible for destroying the records signs and dates the WHO 545 and returns a copy to the unit.

Destroying electronic files

Electronic records are also destroyed according to the records retention schedules, as the format of records does not affect required retention periods. **All existing copies of non-confidential** electronic records approved for destruction should be **deleted**, including:

- reference copies
- system backups
- copies in offsite storage
- files in the *Recycle Bin*

Deleting is not truly equivalent to destroying. Confidential electronic records must be securely destroyed so that information cannot be recovered even through computer forensics processes. Professional information technology staff should carry out reformatting, disk wiping or digital file shredding on hard drives or backup systems. Portable media such as floppy discs and CDs must be physically destroyed (cut up) or magnetically erased.