

Storage and Protection of Physical Records in Government Offices: Recommended Standards

Physical records in government offices (e.g. paper documents, photographs, maps and plans, video and sound recordings) require appropriate storage and protection to minimize risks.

Hazards for these records include water leaks and flooding, high humidity, fire, high temperatures, pest infestation, and security breaches. These dangers put records at risk of damage, loss of information and evidence, and may compromise access and usability.

Storage Location

- Do not store physical records in basements, in attics, on floors, or directly against outside walls. These are high risk areas for leaks, floods, high humidity and pest activity.
- Provide smoke detection and automatic fire suppression systems, and ensure walls, ceiling and doors have a fire-resistive rating of at least 2 hours.
- Choose a room without overhead water pipes, other than for sprinklers. Ensure any outside walls are well insulated, with a good air/vapour barrier. Do not put records in a room with building services such as mechanical equipment, boilers, sump pits, or high voltage electrical panels.
- If vulnerable areas cannot be avoided (e.g. use of below-ground rooms), provide water detection
- Ensure the floor can bear the weight of the records and shelving system.
- Eliminate any carpets and replace with smooth, easy-to-wash flooring.
- Provide security systems to control access, with adequate locks on all doors and windows and a detection system for unauthorized entry.

Storage Room

- Choose stable metal shelving units that can bear the weight of the records.
- Locate shelving away from walls to keep a clear line of sight and enable air circulation.
- Provide good air circulation. Keep room as cool as possible, with temperature no higher than 25°C. Dehumidify the room in summer, so relative humidity rises no higher than 60% RH.
- Implement a pest management/monitoring program or contract for this service to ensure the space remains free of rodents and insect pests, especially silverfish, firebrats, carpet beetles, and cockroaches.
- Be aware that the following records have low chemical stability: all colour photographic prints and negatives; black and white negatives and moving picture film created before 1980; video and sound tapes, disks and other recordings. These usually require colder and drier storage conditions.

Risk Reduction

- House records in folders in boxes, cabinets or other protective storage furnishings.
- Do not allow food, drink, or garbage bins in the storage room.
- Clean room thoroughly on a regular basis and remove clutter.
- Monitor the room conditions regularly for early detection of issues such as high humidity or pests.
- Keep the room in good repair, free of cracks and well sealed, and ensure regular maintenance of building roof and drainage systems.
- [Transfer records](#) to the Government Records Centre.
- Regularly assess and reduce risk appropriately.

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