
Electronic Records Management: Text Messages and Public Records – The Basics

Purpose: Provide a high-level overview to state agencies and local government entities on the basics of managing public records that have been created or received as text messages.

- Text messages about the work of the agency are public records.
- Texting on personally-owned devices about the work of the agency are still public records.
- Retention of text messages is:
 - Responsibility of the agency;
 - Must follow the approved records retention schedules;
 - Is based on the function/content of the message – not its format.
- Agencies need to have policies and procedures that cover:
 - What type of agency business (if any) is appropriate to be conducted via text messaging;
 - How the agency will capture and retain text messages (such as saving messages to an agency server, using third party software to automatically capture text messages, using a vendor service to capture and retain text messages on behalf of the agency, etc.).
- Agencies also need to train their staff and monitor compliance with their agency policies and procedures.

**Additional advice regarding the management of public records is available from
Washington State Archives:**

**www.sos.wa.gov/archives
recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov**