

State and Local Government Agencies of Washington State



ESSENTIAL RECORDS MANUAL

*Office of the Secretary of State
Division of Archives & Records Management*

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Records At Risk?

Consider the following possibilities - Earthquake? Tsunami? Volcanic eruption? Nuclear war? All these are probable but fairly remote possibilities. What about a fire caused by faulty wiring? Have you considered a winter storm as a threat to your records? How about something as mundane as a clogged gutter during a heavy rainfall and where does the water go, but into the basement area containing boxed records? How safe are your agency's records? Which records should be considered vital to operations? How should they be protected?

INTRODUCTION

"Essential Records, what are they?"

Essential records contain information needed during an emergency and for the reestablishment of normal operations after the emergency. Such records contain information necessary to recreate an organization's legal and financial position and to preserve its rights and those of its employees and customers.

Essential records information should be viewed as a resource to be managed just as facilities, personnel, investments and equipment are managed. It is important that essential records are identified before disaster strikes to provide the operating foundation for orderly business and to avoid wasting valuable time when, ultimately, disaster does strike.

Commercial organizations view essential records from the aspect of survival and profit. While government also needs to survive, it must continue to govern as well.

This manual is intended to be a guide to help public officials develop systematic and effective programs for the required protection of essential records in compliance with the spirit of RCW 40.10 (see Appendix A for text of RCW 40.10). It contains basic information that should be useful to any state or local government agency. Each state and local government agency is responsible for planning and putting into effect actions to protect its own records. (See Appendix C for sample of an agency policy and general procedures.)

SCOPE AND NATURE OF THE TASK

"What needs doing and why?"

The State Archivist has been authorized to carry out the provisions of RCW 40.10 as it relates to the preservation of essential records. The identification and protection of essential records also play an important role as part of the Continuity of Government section of the Washington State Disaster Preparedness Plan, pursuant to RCW 38.52. State and local government agencies are required to participate in the state's

disaster plan and to develop a list of essential records to be protected. While the law requires state agencies to file their essential records lists with the State Archivist, it allows local government agencies to coordinate their plans through the State Archivist if they so desire.

The development of an Essential Record Protection Program is an important aspect of records management and is an integral part of disaster preparedness planning. Such a program insures that essential records have been identified, protected, and are immediately available. This minimizes the adverse effects of an emergency or disaster on the activities of your agency. It acts as a cost-justifiable form of self-insurance to protect the interests of the agency, the interests of the public served by the agency, and to provide for the continuity of government in a post-disaster situation.

An Essential Records Protection Program consists of:

- An agency-wide policy
- Development of operating procedures
- Assignment of program responsibilities
- Identification of potential records-related hazards
- Selection of the essential records
- Analysis and classification of essential records
- Designation of appropriate protection methods
- Selection of appropriate essential records storage facilities
- Auditing and testing of the program
- Plans for the continued maintenance of the program

A firm commitment from upper management is necessary to insure the availability of the resources needed for the successful implementation and maintenance of an agency's Essential Records Protection Program. The agency's Records Officer and risk management office should be involved in the conception of the Essential Records Protection Program and the selection of the information to be protected.

To encourage upper management support there needs to be a preliminary report identifying potential hazards to records and pinpointing your agency's vulnerable areas of records keeping. The report should specify areas of concern such as no routine back-ups for individual PC's, no established records management procedures, or even such items as overhead water pipes and clogged gutters or downspouts.

It is important to justify the expenses related to the development and maintenance of an effective Essential Records Protection Program as self-insurance that protects the public interest. It must be recognized that it is impossible to insure the availability of every document that might be valuable as the cost would be prohibitive. An effective

Essential Records Protection Program identifies the records that must be protected based on each agency's unique mission. For other records, decisions must be made by weighing the loss in terms of time and productivity as opposed to the cost of protecting the record, including duplication and security-site storage requirements.

SELECTION AND PROTECTION OF ESSENTIAL RECORDS

"Which records are important and how are they best protected?"

Begin by preparing a comprehensive list of normal agency functions. Then identify which of these functions are critical and the specific records which would be needed to continue or re-establish those functions during and following a disaster. It is important that only information that is absolutely necessary to resume business be classified and protected as essential records. Agency attorneys and auditors can have important input regarding the records chosen for protection. Generally, between 4 - 6% of an agency's records will be considered vital to its survival.

It is important to try to stringently hold to the 4 - 6% rule or the Essential Records Protection Program will become too costly, burdensome, diluted and easily dismissed. *Be aware that there are other records that are vital to the continuity and support of government that are either irreplaceable or necessary that may not fall into this essential records category. These records still warrant protection by duplication or other methods.*

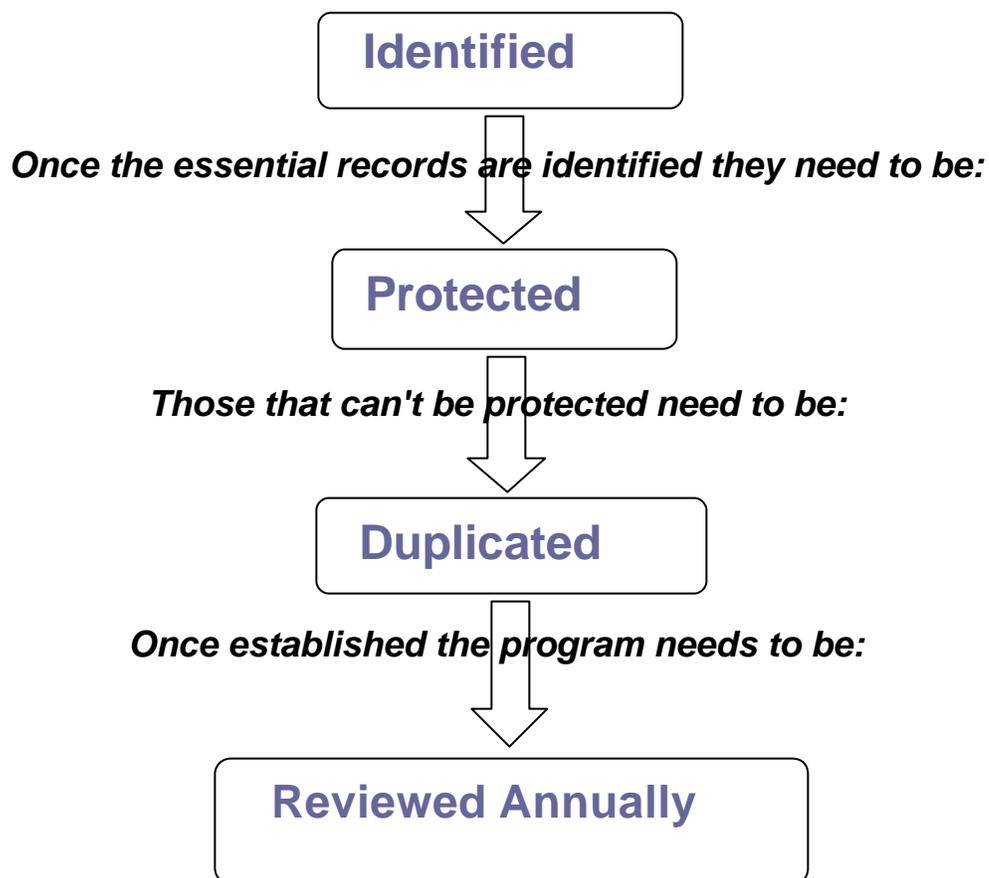
One item to consider when reviewing the usability of essential records is that following a disaster, there may not be electricity which may preclude the use of computers. Alternative forms of duplication such as microforms may need to be considered for some types of records.

It is important to choose protection methods best suited to counteract the potential risks and hazards unique to your area or business practices. The following list may help you identify hazards or risks you may not have considered:

1. Environmental risks - earthquake, floods, wind storms, tornadoes, heavy snowfall, power failure, wind storms
2. Computer-related technical risks – power failure, static electricity, improper grounding, poor virus protection, inadvertent or deliberate deletion of data, document alteration, improper file back-ups
3. Security risks - building access, records access and alteration, key assignments, sabotage or vandalism.

Using your agency's Records Series Inventory Worksheets or the Records Retention Schedules can save considerable time and effort. These documents identify and locate all your agency's records series; indicate if copies are located elsewhere; state the media upon which the series resides; contain retention periods; and include any legal requirements.

In an effective and functioning Essential Records Protection Program, your agency's records need to be:



Identified: The following questions will be helpful in considering which records should be selected as essential.

1. What operations/services are absolutely necessary to resume during and after a disaster?
2. What records are necessary to resume those operations/services?
3. Which records protect and ensure the rights and interests of the public?
4. Which records document money owed to your agency or money expended by your agency?
5. What records are required to maintain the current technical ability and efficiency of your agency?
6. Would the loss of the record make the resumption of agency operations prohibitively expensive or otherwise impossible?

When the essential records have been identified, the following questions should then be asked of each specific record:

1. Is this record duplicated within the organization? Outside the organization?
2. Does this information reside on more than one medium?
3. How much volume (of the record series) accumulates over a given period of time?
4. Is the information very costly to reproduce or reconstruct?
5. Is this record irreplaceable?

Answering these questions will help identify the essential records that need to be considered for duplicating and which method would be the most cost effective. For example: for low volume records with no duplication, photocopying would be a logical approach. If a series has a high volume, duplication by a type of microform could be considered. For high-volume records with a less-than-six-year retention, copying to an electronic medium may be an option. If electronic copying is selected, creating multiple copies with at least one copy in off-site storage is recommended. (See "**Duplicated**" for more detailed information.)

Examples of records to consider as essential:

1. Financial records (records proving monies owed to or owed by the agency)
- accounts receivables/payables, notes, loans and other monetary transactions, general ledgers and warrant registers, major contracts and agreements with all amendments
2. Property ownership records - *deeds, leases, titles*
3. Administrative records - inventories, policies/directives, unique computer programs, as-built drawings and plans, executive records (minutes of directors meetings, organization charts), a complete set of forms.
4. Employee files - rosters for emergency contact, employee benefit and salaries-due records
5. Licensing records
6. Emergency-related records - evacuation plans, security clearances, key lists, floor plans.

Protected: A number of your agency's essential records may already be adequately protected in the following ways:

1. On-site storage - vaults, safes, locked file rooms with sprinkler systems and fire-resistant cabinets.
2. Natural Disbursement (natural dispersal of duplicate information) - copies are distributed to an agency's district or field offices in the course of regular business. These offices can be designated as essential records security sites.

If the identified essential records are not already protected by duplication in the normal course of business, a plan must be developed and implemented to provide duplication.

Duplicated: If not protected, only essential records that can not be reconstructed or are not found at other sites need to be part of a planned duplication process. There are several methods of providing security copies of essential records. Usually, no one method will suffice to secure all the essential records of an agency. Each record must be examined in terms of frequency of use, useful life of the media, bulk of the record, and the cost of copying and storage. Planned dispersal of duplicate information involves the use of copies in a variety of formats. Copies are generated specifically to be sent off-site. This must be done on a regular and a continuing basis to insure current information is available. Arrangements must be made so records can be promptly obtained.

Microfilm is a good choice for high-volume records or records with long retention periods, which are not updated frequently.

Extra paper copies can be produced for essential records with low volume or frequent updating. (Rotation cycles need to be established to insure the current version of the essential records is being secured.)

Magnetic media can be used for records with high volume and frequent updating. NOTE: magnetic media are unstable and easily corrupted by exposure to heat, light or magnetic fields. Consideration needs to be given to the environmental controls of the electronic media storage location. There are both "hot" and "cold" storage sites. Hot sites contain functioning hardware/software prior to an emergency. Cold sites are usually rented with no equipment available.

Other factors to consider are length of storage and cost (method and funding of payment of storage).

Two backups (duplicates) of electronically stored documents should be made to insure full data recovery in the event the primary copy fails. Documentation of system hardware, software and retrieval procedures are required to insure that the data stored electronically can be accessed. Essential records with retentions longer than 10 years that are stored electronically need to be included in the current systems' maintenance and migration plans.

NOTE: Offsite Storage. The Division of Archives and Records Management provides storage at its statewide regional facilities for agency-identified essential records in compressed format on a case-by-case basis. This includes records in microform or copied on electronic media – tape, CD, etc. This service is for storage only. Inactive state records that are also designated as essential can be stored at the State Records Center for the duration of their scheduled retentions. (See Appendix D - contact information for off-site storage of essential records.)

The Division's Security Microfilm Program provides quality inspection and vault storage for the security copies of essential records stored on microfilm. Agency-identified essential records stored on other microforms or electronic media, i.e., tape, CD, etc., are

stored on a case-by-case basis. This service is for storage only. (See Appendix D - contact information for off-site storage of essential records.)

Reviewed Annually: A procedure must be in place to insure that essential records are kept current.

RCW 40.10.010 requires the state agency head to annually review the essential records list and to process any changes to the State Archivist.

The Essential Records Protection Program needs to be tested in mock disaster situations to insure the availability of the needed information within an acceptable response time.

SCHEDULING OF ESSENTIAL RECORDS

"What is it?"

The Essential Records Schedule (see Appendix B for schedule form and instructions) is used to list the agency-designated essential records, specify how they are to be protected, and regulate how frequently they are to be updated or cycled.

SCHEDULE PREPARATION RESPONSIBILITIES

"Who does it?"

The agency records officer is responsible for the development of the agency's Essential Records Schedule and should be included in developing administrative policy (RCW 40.14.040 (2)). The agency head is responsible for reviewing and approving the Essential Records Schedule. For state agencies, one copy is to be filed with the Archives and Records Management Division of the Secretary of State's Office. Additional copies should be available at the appropriate administrative levels within the organization.

Annually, the Records Officer should review the Essential Records Schedule for completeness and update the protection instructions as necessary. Any changes need the approval of the agency head, and for state agencies, these changes will need to be forwarded to the Archives and Records Management Division.

The job of actually applying the protection instructions contained on the Essential Records Schedule consists of doing any required duplicating, transferring the duplications of identified series to offsite storage, and replacing stored copies of the records series which require continual updating. The employee most familiar with the office records should be assigned this task. These employees are often the records coordinator, the office file clerk, or the administrative assistant. The job of securing the Essential Records copies needs to be part of this person's regularly assigned

duties, which would include the allotment of the appropriate amount of time needed to get the job done.

SUMMARY

All records whether public or private are at risk from any of various forms of disasters. Policies and procedures must be in place to provide for the protection of the records vital to an organization's essential operations. These Essential Records can be protected using one or more methods including on-site protection, natural dispersement, planned duplication with off-site storage, and routine replacement of the updated, dispersed information.

RELATED INFORMATION

Disaster Preparedness

Disasters can create new problems that cannot be solved with existing records. Agency staff should speculate about emergency needs and prepare new records, i.e., recovery procedures, employee contact lists, contingency plans, chain of command, and supply lists. These records should be included as part of the agency's essential records, and arrangements should be made for their immediate recall when necessary. The following are some essential records for *Emergency Operations*:

Statements of delegation of authority and succession of command.

Pre-drafted regulations and announcements to be issued immediately upon the onset of an emergency.

Property records sufficient to provide a basis for damage assessment.

Rosters of current and former employees listing their skills, addresses, and phone numbers.

Location of supplies needed to cope with an emergency.

The Essential Records Schedule and Transmittals for retrieval of those records necessary to resume the functions of the agency.

NOTE: Contact the Division of Archives and Records Management (see *Appendix D*) to receive information and assistance for disaster recovery.

Chapter 40.10 RCW

Records for the Continuity of Government

MICROFILMING OF RECORDS TO PROVIDE CONTINUITY OF CIVIL GOVERNMENT

SECTION 40.10.010 Essential records -- Designation -- List -- Security and protection -- Reproduction.

SECTION 40.10.020 Essential records -- Reproduction and storage -- Coordination of protection program -- Fees.

RCW 40.10.010 Essential records -- Designation -- List -- Security and protection -- Reproduction.

In order to provide for the continuity and preservation of civil government, each elected and appointed officer of the state shall designate those public documents which are essential records of his office and needed in an emergency and for the reestablishment of normal operations after any such emergency. A list of such records shall be forwarded to the state archivist on forms prescribed by the state archivist. This list shall be reviewed at least annually by the elected or appointed officer to insure its completeness. Any changes or revisions following this review shall be forwarded to the state archivist. Each such elected and appointed officer of state government shall insure that the security of essential records of his office is by the most economical means commensurate with adequate protection. Protection of essential records may be by vaulting, planned or natural dispersal of copies, or any other method approved by the state archivist. Reproductions of essential records may be by photo copy, magnetic tape, microfilm or other method approved by the state archivist. Local government offices may coordinate the protection of their essential records with the state archivist as necessary to provide continuity of local government under emergency conditions. [1982 c 36 § 1; 1973 c 54 § 1; 1963 c 241 § 1.]

NOTES:

Severability -- 1973 c 54: "If any provision of this 1973 amendatory act, or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act, or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected." [1973 c 54 § 6.]

RCW 40.10.020 Essential records -- Reproduction and storage -- Coordination of protection program -- Fees.

The state archivist is authorized to reproduce those documents designated as essential records by the several elected and appointed officials of the state and local government by microfilm or other miniature photographic process and to assist and cooperate in the storage and safeguarding of such reproductions in such place as is recommended by the state archivist with the advice of the director of community, trade, and economic development. The state archivist shall coordinate the essential records protection program and shall carry out the provisions of the state emergency plan as they relate to the preservation of essential records. The state archivist is authorized to charge the several departments of the state and local government the actual cost incurred in reproducing, storing and safeguarding such documents: PROVIDED, That nothing herein shall authorize the destruction of the originals of such documents after reproduction thereof.

[1995 c 399 § 58; 1986 c 266 § 45; 1985 c 7 § 106; 1982 c 36 § 2; 1973 c 54 § 2; 1963 c 241 § 2.]

NOTES:

Severability -- 1986 c 266: See note following [RCW 38.52.005](#).

ESSENTIAL RECORDS PROTECTION SCHEDULE

Course of Action



Archives and Records Management Division
PO Box 40238
Olympia WA 98504-0238

1. AGENCY NAME:			2. SCHEDULE DATE:		
3. Item No:	4. SERIES TITLE	5. OFFICE OF RECORD	6. MEDIA TYPE	7. UPDATE CYCLE OR TOTAL RETENTION	8. PROTECTION INSTRUCTIONS
9. DISTRIBUTION: <input type="checkbox"/> Div. of Archives & Rec. Mgmt. <input type="checkbox"/> Agency Records Officer <input type="checkbox"/> Office of Origin		10. RECORDS OFFICER'S INITIALS:	11. DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: <hr/> <hr/> Print name/title		

Essential Records Protection Schedule Instructions

1. AGENCY NAME: Enter your official agency name.
2. SCHEDULE DATE: Enter date of creation.
3. NUMBER: Sequentially number each records series for referencing.
4. SERIES TITLE: List the name of the essential record series.
5. OFFICE: Enter the title of the originating division and office. This information does not need to be repeated unless essential records of several offices are listed on the same form.
6. MEDIA: Indicate how each essential record series will be duplicated for security purposes, e.g., hardcopy, computer output microfiche, magnetic tape, CD, etc.
7. UPDATE CYCLE OR TOTAL RETENTION: Indicate the total amount of time this essential record series copy is to be retained or indicate the frequency that the copy will be updated by subsequent data. It is important to establish an updating cycle in order to keep the information or data current. If the essential record series copy is to be kept for its full retention and is being stored in an electronic format, enter the total retention in this column plus indicate the life expectancy of the medium and when re-copying or migrating needs to occur.
8. PROTECTION INSTRUCTIONS: Indicate the protection method that you have determined is appropriate for each essential record listed - natural or planned dispersal, on-site in vaults or fire-proof cabinets, off-site, etc.
9. DISTRIBUTION: Mark copies of this schedule according to their internal and external distribution.
10. RECORDS OFFICER INITIALS: Following a review of the schedule, the agency records officer places his/her signature here.
11. DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE: The signature of the agency director is placed here. RCW 40.10.010 requires an annual review of the essential records list. The records process any changes to the State Archivist. Add the agency's director's name and title.

SAMPLE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

I. DIVISIONS AFFECTED

All divisions are affected. RCW 40.10

II. POLICY

It is agency policy:

To insure the protection of records deemed essential to the functions of the agency during an emergency, and to the restoration of normal operations afterward.

To identify and protect those records necessary to insure the rights and interests of the public, individuals and businesses served or regulated by this agency.

To identify and protect those records necessary to insure the rights and interests of the agency as a governmental entity.

III. ESSENTIAL RECORDS SCHEDULE

The schedule serves as a written plan and guideline for protecting the essential records of the agency from disaster. The media selection for duplication and storage protection method is subject to administrative approval and must be by the most economical means.

The original copy is sent to the Division of Archives and Records Management for the official filing.

All divisions will conduct an annual review of the Essential Records Schedule, making changes or revisions as necessary, subject to the director's approval.

IV. RESPONSIBILITIES

RECORDS OFFICER. The agency records officer coordinates the program, by both developing administrative policy, and appointing individuals to develop Essential Records Schedules for each office. The records officer should be responsible for distributing schedules and any necessary supplies for records dispersal.

AGENCY DIRECTOR. The agency head reviews and approves (indicated by signature) the Essential Records Schedule.

Each agency also will need a set of procedures to include:

Access to essential records

Use of essential records

Transfer and disposition of essential records

Emergencies

Recovery from disaster

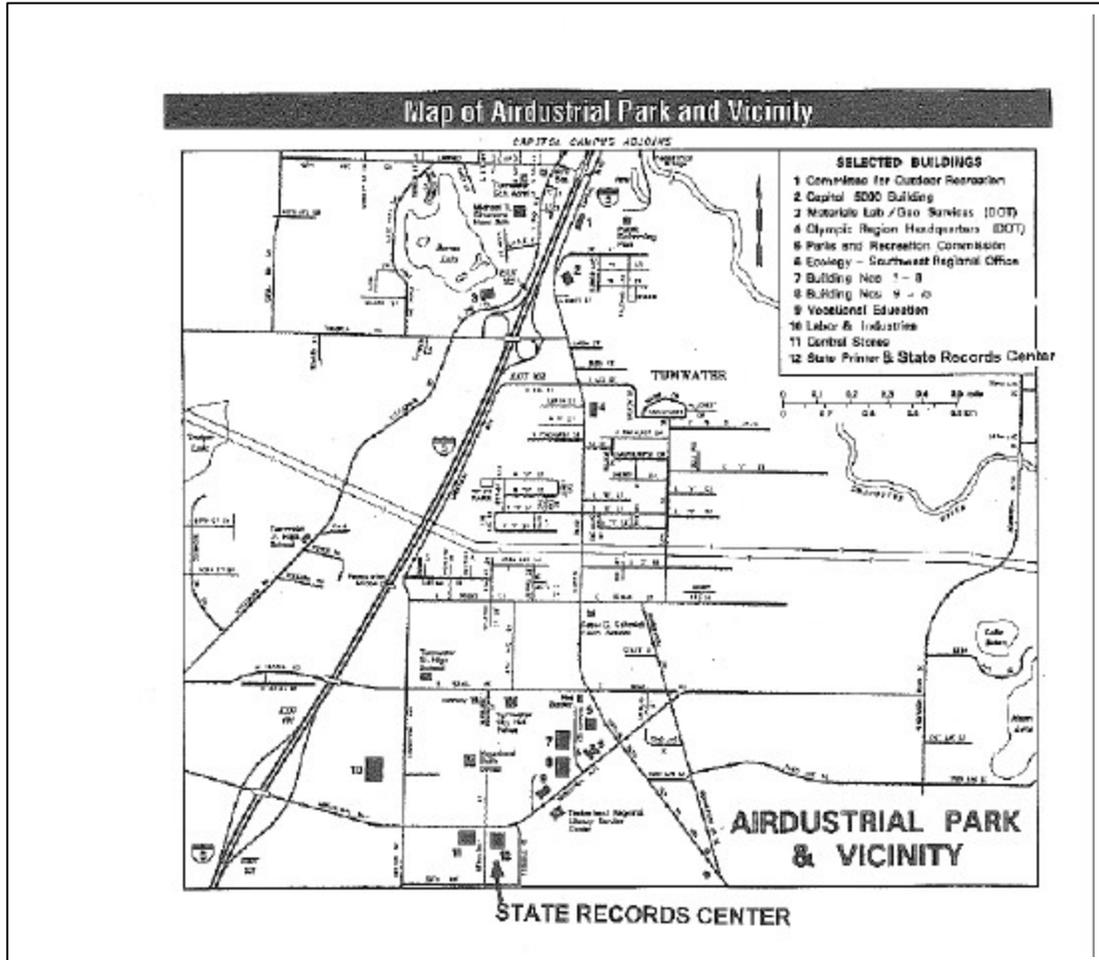
OFF-SITE STORAGE FACILITIES

ESSENTIAL RECORDS MICROFILMING AND STORAGE

The Division of Archives and Records Management's Imaging and Preservation Services Section provides microfilming services for agency-identified essential records on an at-cost basis. This section also provides vault storage for the security copies of essential records in microform and on electronic media (i.e., tape, CD, etc.) on a case-by-case basis. Contact the Imaging and Preservation Services manager 360/586-2487 or e-mail at archives@secstate.wa.gov.

THE STATE RECORDS CENTER

The State Records Center can act as off-site storage for agency-identified essential records that have a portion of their approved retention period designated as inactive. The State Records Center offers a secure location with a fire suppressant system. Contact your agency's records officer for records retention information.



7590 New Market Street SW
Tumwater, Washington 98501
(360) 753-5468

THE REGIONAL ARCHIVES BRANCH SYSTEM

The Division of Archives and Records Management has developed a system of regional branches in order to make its services more directly available to agencies throughout the state. For assistance with the off-site storage of essential records, contact the regional branch for your location.

<p>CENTRAL BRANCH Bledsoe-Washington Building Central Washington University MS: 7547 400 East 8th Ellensburg, WA 98926-7547 Tim Eckert, Regional Archivist Phone: (509) 963-2136 FAX: (509) 963-1753 Email: archives@cwu.edu Web Site: cwu.edu/~archives</p>	<p>EASTERN BRANCH Eastern Washington University 211 Tawanka Cheney, WA 99004 Sherry Bays, Regional Archivist Phone: (509) 359-6900 FAX: (509) 359-6286 Email: era@mail.ewu.edu Web Site: www.ewu.edu/era</p>	<p>NORTHWEST BRANCH Goltz-Murray Building Western Washington University 808 25th Street Bellingham, WA 98225-9123 Diana Shenk, Regional Archivist Phone: (360) 650-3125 FAX: (360) 650-3323 Email: State.Archives@wwu.edu</p>
<p>PUGET SOUND BRANCH Pritchard - Fleming Building 3000 Landerholm Circle SE MS: N-100 Bellevue, WA 98007 Mike Saunders, Regional Archivist Phone: (425) 564-3950 FAX: (425) 564-3945 Email: msaunder@bcc.ctc.edu</p>	<p>SOUTHWEST BRANCH State Archives Building 1129 Washington Street SE PO Box 40238 Olympia, WA 98504-0238 Wayne Lawson, Regional Archivist Phone: (360) 586-4898 FAX: (360) 664-8814 Email: Southwest@secstate.wa.gov</p>	

