Electronic Records Management: 
Basics of Managing Text Messages

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.
- Text messages sent or received on personally-owned devices about the work of the agency are still public records.

- Retention of text messages:
  - Is the 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
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