

## Using Retention Schedules: How Long Do Drone Recordings Need to Be Kept?

**Purpose:** Provide guidance to state and local government entities on the retention of drone recordings.



### Is there one retention period for drone recordings?

**NO** – The retention period for public records depends on the *function* and *content* of the record, not its format.

How long drone recordings need to be kept depends on the agency's business, legal, and accountability needs to retain what is documented in the drone recording. Like public records in any format, some only need to be kept for a very short time, some need to be kept a little longer, and some will be "Archival" and kept forever.

The questions to ask to determine the function/content of drone recordings are:

1. What is the drone recording about? (content)
2. Why was it recorded and for what purpose? (function)

Having just one blanket retention period for drone recordings is akin to having a single retention period for all letter-sized paper – the format does not determine the retention.

### Where can I find out what the retention is based on the function and content?

**RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULES** – These schedules set out the minimum required retention periods and grant permission to either destroy or transfer the records at the end of that period. The current approved records retention schedules are available from Washington State Archives' website.

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

**[www.sos.wa.gov/archives](http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives)  
[recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov)**