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## Organizing and Inventorying Records: Selecting Appropriate Shelving for Records Storage

**Purpose: Provide guidance to state and local governments on choosing appropriate shelving for paper records storage.**

The following considerations will help your agency to choose the most suitable shelving for its records storage needs.

### Materials

- If at all possible, shelving should be **all metal**. Plastic and wood can off-gas chemicals that can damage records over time, and wood retains moisture, which can encourage mold and mildew.

### Load Capacity of Floor and Shelves

- Have a structural engineer determine how much weight the floor can support in the area where you will be installing the shelving.
- Consider the weight of the records (each full Archives storage box can weigh 30 pounds) **plus** the weight of the shelving unit itself, and make sure that the total weight load will be well within the load capacity for the shelf location.

### Height of Boxes and Shelves

- Archives storage boxes are 10.75" tall. You need at least 11.25" of vertical shelf space to accommodate an Archives box.
- Your lowest shelf should be at least 6" off the floor to protect the records from flooding.
- Your highest shelf should be no more than 6' off the ground for health and safety reasons, unless a stepladder is used.

### Depth of Boxes and Shelves

- Archives storage boxes measure 16.25" on their longest side.
- Will you be accessing the shelves from one side (18" shelf depth recommended), or both sides (36" shelf depth recommended)?

### Width of Boxes and Shelves

- Archives storage boxes measure 12.875" wide on their shorter (label) side. How many boxes will your shelf unit hold?
- Allow for air space between boxes so that they can be moved easily. In the (hopefully unlikely) event that the records get wet, they will expand significantly, and that extra space can make a difference in being able to remove the records.

Making these calculations beforehand will help you to determine the most appropriate shelving product for your specific needs and available space.

**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)**