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**This schedule applies to: County Coroners and Medical Examiners**

**Scope of records retention schedule**

This records retention schedule authorizes the destruction/transfer of public records of County Coroners and Medical Examiners relating to the function of death investigation and other duties in accordance with [chapters 36.24](#) and [68.50 RCW](#). It is to be used in conjunction with the *Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)*, which authorizes the destruction/transfer of public records common to all local government agencies. *CORE* can be accessed online at: <http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/recordsmanagement/UsingtheLocalGovernmentCommonRecordsRetentionScheduleCORE.aspx>.

**Disposition of public records**

Public records covered by records series within this records retention schedule must be retained for the minimum retention period as specified in this schedule. Washington State Archives strongly recommends the disposition of public records at the end of their minimum retention period for the efficient and effective management of local resources.

Public records designated as Archival (Permanent Retention) or Non-Archival (with a retention period of “Life of the Agency” or “Permanent”) must not be destroyed. Records designated as Archival (Appraisal Required) must be appraised by the Washington State Archives before disposition. Public records must not be destroyed if they are subject to ongoing or reasonably anticipated litigation. Such public records must be managed in accordance with the agency’s policies and procedures for legal holds. Public records must not be destroyed if they are subject to an existing public records request in accordance with [chapter 42.56 RCW](#). Such public records must be managed in accordance with the agency’s policies and procedures for public records requests.

In addition to the minimum retention requirements specified in this schedule, there may be additional (longer) retention requirements mandated by federal, state and/or local statute, grant agreement, and/or other contractual obligations.

**Revocation of previously issued records retention schedules**

All previously approved disposition authorities for records that are covered by this retention schedule are revoked, including those listed in all general and agency unique retention schedules. Local government agencies should take measures to ensure that the retention and disposition of public records is in accordance with current approved records retention schedules.

**Authority**

This records retention schedule was approved by the Local Records Committee in accordance with [RCW 40.14.070](#) on June 25, 2015.

*Signature on File*

**For the State Auditor: Cindy Evans**

*Signature on File*

**For the Attorney General: Matt Kernutt**

*Signature on File*

**The State Archivist: Steve Excell**

## Revision History

Version	Date Approved	Extent of Revision
1.0	11/29/2012	New sector schedule created from records series imported from version 5.2 of the <i>Local Government General Records Retention Schedule (LGGRRS)</i> , which has been dismantled. 4 series have been designated “Archival – Permanent Retention” (Card File Index, Inquests, Coroner/Medical Examiner Investigation Files, and Coroner/Medical Examiner Ledger). All disposition authority numbers (DANs) have been assigned a prefix of “CO” and a revision number of “0” (zero). A glossary of terms is located in the <i>Local Government Common</i>
2.0	06/25/2015	Major revision/overhaul. Consolidation of all records relating to deaths reported to the County Coroner/Medical Examiner <i>whether or not jurisdiction is assumed</i> in order to simplify AND align with modern (electronic) recordkeeping practices. Death Ledgers/Registers are legacy records that possess enduring historical value and should be transferred to Washington State Archives. Financial records relating to indigent burial are covered by GS2011-184, <b>Financial Transactions – General</b> , in the <a href="#">Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)</a> . All changes are detailed in the <a href="#">Summary of Changes</a> . Note: <b>Biological samples</b> are <u>not</u> considered public records for purposes of <a href="#">chapter 40.14 RCW</a> , and should be retained and disposed of pursuant to County Coroner/Medical Examiner policy.

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## 1. DEATH INVESTIGATION

The function of determining cause of death and the management of the bodies and property of deceased individuals in accordance with [chapter 68.50 RCW](#).

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY NUMBER (DAN)	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	RETENTION AND DISPOSITION ACTION	DESIGNATION
CO50-34-03 Rev. 1	<p><b><i>Death Investigation Case Files</i></b></p> <p>All records relating to the investigation of deceased persons by the County Coroner/Medical Examiner, including initial notice, determination of manner &amp; cause of death, identification of the deceased, certification of death, and disposition of remains. Includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All notices of death (<i>whether or not</i> jurisdiction is assumed and <i>whether or not</i> full investigation is warranted);</li> <li>• All manners of death (accident, natural, homicide, suicide and undetermined);</li> <li>• Investigative work (scene notes and sketches; photographs, audio/video/digital recordings, etc.);</li> <li>• Laboratory work (autopsy report, radiographs, lab reports, state toxicologist analyses, dental records, etc.);</li> <li>• Coroner's inquests held pursuant to <a href="#">RCW 36.24.020</a> (including coroner's files, transcripts, records of oral proceedings, list of impaneled juror <i>names</i>, etc.);</li> <li>• Personal property list compiled pursuant to <a href="#">RCW 68.50.040</a>; property release forms; suicide notes (or <i>copies</i> of suicide notes), etc.;</li> <li>• Disposition of remains (including claimed, unclaimed, indigent, etc.);</li> <li>• Related correspondence, regardless of format;</li> <li>• Index used to identify/locate individual case files (card index, register, list, spreadsheet, database, etc.).</li> </ul> <p>Excludes financial records relating to indigent burial covered by GS2011-184, <i>Financial Transactions – General</i> in the <a href="#">Local Government Common Records Retention Schedule (CORE)</a>. <i>Note: Includes confidential records, which will retain their confidentiality at Washington State Archives pursuant to state law.</i></p>	<p>Retain one copy permanently <i>and</i> Contact Washington State Archives for appraisal and transfer of paper/hard copy, electronic copy, microfilm, and/or any other format.</p>	<p><b>ARCHIVAL</b> (Appraisal Required) <b>ESSENTIAL</b> OPR</p>

**County Coroners and Medical Examiners Records Retention Schedule**  
**Version 2.0 (June 25, 2015)**

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY NUMBER (DAN)	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	RETENTION AND DISPOSITION ACTION	DESIGNATION
CO50-34-06 Rev. 1	<b><i>Morgue Register</i></b> Register/log recording the arrival and removal of human remains from morgues established pursuant to <a href="#">RCW 68.52.010</a> .	<b>Retain</b> for 6 years after last log entry <i>then</i> <b>Destroy.</b>	NON-ARCHIVAL NON-ESSENTIAL OPR

## 2. LEGACY RECORDS (no longer created and/or received by County Coroners)

These are records no longer created by County Coroners; however, Coroners/Medical Examiner offices may still hold some of these records.

DISPOSITION AUTHORITY NUMBER (DAN)	DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS	RETENTION AND DISPOSITION ACTION	DESIGNATION
CO50-34-02 Rev. 1	<p><b>Death Ledger/Register</b></p> <p>Death ledgers/registers created by County Coroners from early statehood into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While bound volumes/ledgers are no longer created, offices <i>may</i> still hold these records <i>which possess enduring legal and/or historical value</i>.</p> <p>Death ledgers/registers contain information <i>such as</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name, gender, race, marital status, residence, occupation &amp; age of deceased;</li> <li>• Date and place of birth;</li> <li>• Date and place of death;</li> <li>• Cause and manner of death;</li> <li>• Name of person who signed the death return/certificate.</li> </ul> <p>Excludes <b>Death Investigation Case Files</b> (and indexes) covered by CO50-34-03.</p>	<p><b>Retain</b> until no longer needed for agency business <i>and</i> <b>Contact</b> Washington State Archives for appraisal and transfer of paper/hard copy, electronic copy, microfilm, and/or any other format.</p>	<p><b>ARCHIVAL</b> (Permanent Retention) <b>ESSENTIAL</b> OPR</p>

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For assistance and advice in applying this records retention schedule,

please contact Washington State Archives at:

[recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov](mailto:recordsmanagement@sos.wa.gov)

or contact your Regional Archivist.

<http://www.sos.wa.gov/archives/>