



Email Records Retention

Effective Date: December 4, 2023
Last Revised:
CAO Signature:

1. Purpose

This policy affirms the City's principles for the management of email records, including their retention and destruction.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all City email and email accounts. This policy is subject to the City's records management bylaws, policies, procedures and systems.

3. Exclusions

This policy does not apply to email records:

- a) that are personal in nature and do not relate to the operations of the City and are not required for such operations;
- b) that are not within the custody or control of the City.

4. Definitions

- a) **Fileplan** means the City's records classification and retention schedule which establishes the classification system and retention periods for all City records including their final disposition.
- b) **Office of Primary Responsibility** or **OPR** means the business unit that has primary responsibility for a certain subject matter, initiative, directive relationship [instruction as set by your supervisor], or activity and is responsible for maintaining the official records for that matter in order to satisfy operational, financial, legal, audit and other requirements.
- c) **Records Coordinator** means a business unit team member, appointed by their manager, to provide records management support to their team to ensure the proper creation, maintenance, protection, storage, and retention of City records in accordance with the City's records management policies.



- d) **Substantive email** means an email that is not transitory and must be retained in accordance with the City's Fileplan.
- e) **Transitory email** means an email that has short-term use only, does not need to be filed or retained, and can be destroyed once it has served its purpose.

This includes:

- (1) Casual or non-substantive messages (e.g. meeting arrangements, social event details, etc.);
- (2) Drafts or rough notes that do not contain significant annotations, comments, approvals, or substantial changes providing insight into the evolution of a decision;
- (3) Emails conveying an attachment (if the email doesn't add value to the attachment);
- (4) cc copies (unless you are the main staff member responsible for the matter);
- (5) Routine correspondence about drafts and revisions;
- (6) Emails from external sources that have been used solely for short-term reference purposes or not at all, including extracts or copies of publications, promotional material, and other material from external sources.

Transitory emails do not include:

- (1) Emails that contains evidence of City official business, policies, transactions, activities, decisions, or the progress toward an operational or administrative decision;
- (2) Emails that document or provide support of a business activity that pertains to governance, policies or compliance with externally mandated regulations;
- (3) Emails that require or authorize an important course of action or business decision;
- (4) Emails that set a precedent; or
- (5) Emails that detail obligations or responsibilities of the City.

5. Policy Statements

- a) The retention of a City record is determined by its content and context, not its form or format. Therefore, the retention of an email is determined by the subject matter and context of that email.
- b) Staff will permanently delete transitory emails in a timely manner, including copies of emails that have been saved outside of the City's email software program (e.g. saved to the City's network drives or laptop).
- c) Staff will manage substantive emails in accordance with the retention schedules established through the City's Fileplan. This includes ensuring the appropriate storage of emails for the duration of their life cycle.
- d) Substantive emails will be retained by the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR). Other business areas that have been copied on the email may delete the email as soon as they are done with it, as such copies are considered transitory.
- e) Substantive emails sent to external parties will be retained by the staff member who sent them, or by someone delegated by that staff member to manage such records.
- f) The manager of a business unit may appoint a records coordinator who is responsible for the proper maintenance, storage and disposition of substantive emails in accordance with the Fileplan.
- g) Staff may organize their email within individual email inbox subfolders (by Fileplan classification) until their active retention period lapses or until the email is saved to one of the City's approved document management systems (e.g. edocs DM).
- h) Staff will regularly review the contents of their email folders for:
 - i. transitory records that can be permanently deleted; and
 - ii. substantive emails that have come to the end of their life cycle as per the Fileplan, which can now be permanently deleted.
- i) Although Staff are encouraged to proactively and permanently delete transitory emails as soon as they are no longer required, it is acceptable to store transitory records for a short period in the 'deleted' folder in Outlook. Staff may use the 'deleted' folder for transitory records only.

6. Related Policies

Other related policies include:

- a) Records Management Policy A014
- b) Acceptable Use of Information Technology A009