



Records Management Guidance

Transitory Records

What is “transitory”?

Transitory records have short-term value, or no value at all. They do **not** serve as evidence of you performing your job or your agency performing its functions; and do **not** result in or require any action from you.

Why is this important?

All King County employees have transitory records. They are clogging up our Outlook accounts, OneDrive accounts, shared drives, and other places we store information. The huge volume of transitory records that we all create and maintain is a liability that makes it difficult to find information needed to support business or respond to public records requests.

What should you do with them?

- **Delete or destroy them (no destruction form is required)**
- Where possible, avoid creating or keeping them in the first place
- You can keep them as reference, but best practice is to **destroy them as soon as they are identified**
- Remember to **Empty** your **Deleted Items** folder periodically, or they will remain there indefinitely
- Do **not** file them to Content Manager, and do not store them with records that do have retention value

Examples of transitory records (email):

- out-of-office replies
- accepted, tentative, or rejected meeting notices
- email delivery notices and read receipts
- most auto-generated emails (including from Cherwell, PeopleSoft, and other systems)
- newsletters, bulletins and FYIs you have received (including emails sent to most ZZGroups)
- non-substantive communication (i.e. an email that just says “remember to fill out your time sheet before you leave”, “thank you”, “call me when you’re free”, “I’m running late”, “sounds good”, etc.)
- emails you are CCed on that do not result in any action from you
- emails that should be responded to by someone else, and your only action is to forward them
- personal or non-work-related emails
- draft emails that won’t be sent
- Unsolicited email: spam, junk mail, or commercial advertisements



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Examples of transitory records (all other electronic formats):

- Duplicate copies (when the original copy is *definitely* retained)
- Drafts that do not document significant or substantive changes
- Blank forms
- Informal notes that do not need to be retained, or are documented as part of a formal process
- Most documents in the Downloads folder in OneDrive (provided that you do not need to retain them or take further action on them)
- Screenshots captured used to develop other documents or emails (many people have a “Screenshots” folder in their Pictures folder in OneDrive where these are automatically captured)
- Non-county records or materials kept as reference (training materials, handouts, articles, etc.)
- Electronic versions of documents that are printed and finalized as paper copies
- Internet browsing history and cached/temporary files
- Personal records
- Microsoft 365 sign-in notifications, including those received as text messages

Examples of transitory records (physical/paper records):

- Blank forms
- Duplicate copies
- Informal handwritten notes
- Non-county records or materials kept as reference (training materials, handouts, articles, etc.)
- Business cards and other contact information
- Personal records
- Paper copies of records that have been digitized according to an approved DAD application

Do you still have questions?

The above is **not** an exhaustive list of what is considered transitory. Everyone’s records vary and there is not a broad definition that will apply equally to each person’s records. What is transitory for you is not necessarily transitory for someone else. A good start is to do your best to identify and delete records that are *obviously* transitory. For more information, look at your [records retention schedule](#) or ask your [Records Management Lead](#) for more information about what might be transitory for your agency.



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