

# **Records Management Policy for City of Canton GA.**

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**Records management** refers to the handling of all documents and records, in any and all formats, during their life cycles. Records management includes determining what format the document is received or accepted in, what format it is kept in, how it is labeled, how it is used, who has access to it, who keeps it, where it is kept, how long it is kept, and when and how it is disposed of.

### **Purpose**

The City of Canton is responsible for managing its records in a structured record keeping system and putting the necessary policies and procedures in place to ensure that its record keeping and records management practices comply with the requirements of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) 50-18-90 through 103, known as the “Georgia Records Act”, and the Georgia Archives Retention Schedules ([georgiaarchives.org](http://georgiaarchives.org)) as adopted by the State of Georgia.

“All records created or received in the performance of a public duty or paid for by a governing body are deemed to be public property and shall constitute a record of public acts.” O.C.G.A. §50-18-99(a)(c).

Therefore, appropriate records management is vital to the maintenance and preservation of the public’s records. Good records management:

- Contributes to the smooth operation of the City's business by making the information needed for decision making and operations readily available;
- Helps deliver services in a consistent and equitable manner;
- Protects the rights of the agency, its employees, and its customers;
- Provides continuity in the event of a disaster;
- Reduces vulnerability to legal challenge or financial loss;
- Promotes efficiency in terms of human and space resources through greater coordination of information and storage systems;
- Protects records from inappropriate and unauthorized access; and
- Meets statutory and regulatory requirements.

This Policy is for the purpose of presenting guidelines, responsibilities, and requirements for the effective management of the City’s Records in compliance with State law.

### **Policy Statement**

The City of Canton’s policy is to have a city-wide records management program that maintains, protects, retains, and disposes of records in accordance with operational needs, governmental regulations, fiscal/legal requirements, historical, and reference purposes.

The following principles apply to the record management practices of the City of Canton:

- The City of Canton follows sound procedures for the creation, maintenance, retention, and disposal of all records, including electronic records.
- The records management procedures of the City of Canton comply with legal requirements, including those for the provision of evidence.
- The City of Canton follows sound procedures for the security, privacy, and confidentiality of its records.

## **Scope and intended audience**

This policy impacts upon City of Canton's work practices for all those who:

- create records including electronic records;
- have access to records;
- have any other responsibilities for records;
- have management responsibility for staff engaged in any of these activities;
- or manage, or have design input into information technology infrastructure.

The policy therefore applies to all staff members of the City of Canton and covers all records.

## **Definitions**

### ***Custody:***

The control of records based upon their physical possession.

### ***Disposal:***

The action of either destroying/deleting a record.

### ***Disposal authority:***

A written authority issued by The Georgia Archives specifying the retention time for the records of local governments.

### ***Electronic records:***

Information which is generated electronically and stored by means of computer technology. Electronic records can consist of an electronic correspondence system and electronic record systems other than the correspondence system.

### ***Electronic records system:***

This is the collective noun for all components of an electronic information system, namely: electronic media as well as all connected items such as source documents, output information, software applications, programs, and metadata. All these components are defined as records by the Georgia Records Act. They must therefore be dealt with in accordance with the Act's provisions.

### ***File plan:***

An organized plan by which records are filed and/or electronically indexed to facilitate efficient retrieval and disposal of records.

### ***Long term records:***

Records that have a retention period or usefulness of more than 5 years.

### ***Short term records:***

Records that have a retention period or usefulness of less than 5 years.

***Public record:***

A record created or received by a governmental body in pursuance of its activities, regardless of form or medium.

***Record:***

All documents, papers, letters, books, maps, photographs, sound or video recordings, microfilm, magnetic tape, electronic media, or other information recording media, regardless of physical form or characteristic and regardless of whether public access to it is open or restricted under the laws of the state, created or received by the office or any of its officers or employees pursuant to law or in the transaction of public business are records of the City.

***Records management:***

Records management is a process of ensuring the proper creation, maintenance, use, and disposal of records throughout their life cycles to achieve efficient, transparent, and accountable governance.

***Retention period:***

The length of time that records should be retained before they are disposed of/deleted.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### ***City of Canton Government***

- The City of Canton is ultimately responsible for its record keeping and records management practices and is committed to enhance accountability, transparency, and improvement of service delivery by ensuring that sound records management practices are implemented and maintained;
- The City of Canton supports the implementation of this policy and requires each staff member to support the values underlying in this policy;
- The Canton City Council designates the City Clerk to be the Records Manager of the City of Canton and shall mandate the records manager to perform such duties as are necessary to enhance the record keeping and records management practices of Canton to ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements.

### ***Records Manager***

The Records Manager is responsible for:

- the implementation of this policy through staff training and other interventions as are necessary to ensure that Canton's record keeping and records management practices comply with the records management principles as required by law;
- the management of all records according to the management principles contained O.C.G.A. 50-18-90 through 50-18-103 known as the "Georgia Records Act";
- determination of retention periods not specifically contained in the Georgia Archives Schedules, in consultation with the users and taking into account the functional, legal, and historical need of the records;

- ensuring that all records created and received by Canton are classified according to the approved Department file plan and that a written disposal record is kept;
- assisting Departments with advice regarding records management issues.

### ***IT Manager***

- The IT manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of electronic systems that stores records and shall ensure that public records are properly managed, protected, and appropriately preserved for as long as they are required for business, legal, and long-term preservation purposes.
- The IT manager shall dispose of electronic records as scheduled by the records manager.
- The IT manager shall ensure that all electronic systems capture appropriate systems generated metadata and audit trail data for all electronic records to ensure that authentic and reliable records are created;
- The IT manager shall ensure that electronic records in all electronic systems remain accessible by migrating them to new hardware and software platforms when there is a danger of technology obsolescence including media and format obsolescence.
- The IT manager shall ensure that all data, metadata, audit trail data, operating systems, and application software are backed up to enable the recovery of authentic, reliable, and accessible records should a disaster occur and that back-ups are stored in a secure off-site environment.
- The IT manager shall ensure that systems that manage and store records are virus free.

### ***Department Heads***

- The Department Heads are responsible for the implementation of this policy in their respective units. They shall lead by example and shall themselves maintain good record keeping and records management practices.;
- Department Heads shall ensure that all staff is made aware of their record keeping and records management responsibilities and obligations and ensure that the management of records including e-mail is a key responsibility in the performance agreements of all the staff in their units.

### ***Department Records Manager***

- Due to the diversity of the records kept by the City, each Department should develop its own file plan in order to assure that records are retained in a manner that provides for efficient retrieval and appropriate disposal.
- It should be the duty of the Department Record Manager to ensure that new employees are trained regarding the file plan and that the file plan is updated and implemented.

***Staff***

- Every staff member shall create and maintain appropriate records of transactions while conducting official business.
- Every staff member shall manage those records efficiently and effectively by labelling all records using common descriptive terminology and disposal dates.
- Will ensure that records are disposed of /deleted only in accordance with the retention schedules of The Georgia Archives.

Records management responsibilities shall be written into the performance agreements of all staff members to ensure that staff is evaluated on their records management responsibilities.

**File plan**

Each Department should develop its own file plan in order to ensure the integrity of its records. The file plan shall include a framework for the maintenance of the department's records such as storage and labelling using common descriptive terminology and disposal dates. All staff in each department should use the same terminology and record maintenance standards while managing records on their individual PCs in order to ensure reliability and continuity and to guarantee the ability to locate records on any departmental computer by all departmental staff.

**Records Retention/Storage**

- Records should be kept or disposed of in accordance to the Georgia Archives Retention Schedules ([georgiaarchives.org](http://georgiaarchives.org)).
- Saved records are to be labeled using common descriptive terminology and disposal dates.
- Long term paper records should be scanned as soon as possible and the paper copies disposed of.
- Short term paper records can either be scanned in or if not needed to be immediately available, stored in boxes.
- All stored records should be disposed of or deleted according the retention schedules.

**Electronic systems other than the correspondence systems (email)**

- Canton has a number of electronic records systems in operation which are not part of the correspondence system and that generate and store public records.
- The IT manager is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance of these systems.
- The records maintained in these systems are under the control of the records manager who is mandated to ensure that they are managed properly.

**Scanning**

- Scanning is encouraged for all records with a retention time of more than 5 years. It would be preferable for all records that are not submitted electronically to be scanned upon receipt and the file built electronically.

- Once your item is scanned the electronic record will be considered the official copy and the paper copy should be disposed of.
- Documents of historical value should however be scanned in and the paper copy kept; both should be retained permanently.

### **Individual Staff Computers**

ORCA – short term storage that allows each document to be available to multiple users.

Laserfische - used for long term storage and requires a template to ensure reliable searchable capability. Templates are created by IT when needed for new types of documents. The City needs to rely on the documents stored on Laserfische to be copies of the original documents, therefore, Laserfische documents are not to be changed or modified in any way. Ever.

### **Vital Records**

Vital records are records that are essential to the continued functioning or reconstitution of the City and its operating units during and after an emergency. Each Department is responsible for identifying, creating, and maintaining its vital records.

Vital records are divided into two categories:

- Emergency operating records include emergency plans and directive(s), orders of succession, delegations of authority, staffing assignments, selected program records needed to continue the most critical Departments and operating unit functions, as well as related policy or procedural records that would be needed to conduct operations under emergency conditions and to resume normal operations after the emergency.
- Legal and financial rights records are essential to protect the legal and financial rights of the government and of the individuals directly affected by its activities. Examples of these records include titles, deeds, leases, contracts, personnel files, and similar records.

Vital records are duplicate records created and maintained solely in case of an emergency. They may be disposed of when no longer needed. Procedures for the creation and maintenance of vital records and their identification are in the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for each operating unit.

### **Disposal of/Deletion of Records**

- No public records shall be destroyed, erased, or otherwise disposed of without prior written authorization from the Department Records Manager.
- All public records shall be disposed of/ deleted according to the Georgia Archives Retention Schedules ([georgiaarchives.org](http://georgiaarchives.org)) and in no other manner.
- The Georgia Archives record retention schedules dictate the length of record retention. Since each Department has the best knowledge of the types and uses of its records, if a specific record is not on the schedules, the Department Records Manager shall determine and document how long those records are to be kept. The determination will be made through consideration of the use of the record, its



similarity to another record that *is* on the schedules, and consultation with the Department Head.

- The Department Records Manager manages the disposal schedule and all disposal actions should be authorized by the Department Records Manager *prior* to their execution to ensure that archival records are not destroyed inadvertently.
- Disposal of records according to the retention schedules should take place yearly.
- Non-archival records that are needed for present or anticipated litigation or open records may not be destroyed until such time that the City Clerk or City Attorney has indicated that the “destruction hold” can be lifted.
- Paper-based archival records shall be electronically scanned and then maintained in safe storage as determined by the City Clerk for its preservation.
- The disposal of all records shall be recorded and forwarded to the City Clerk for retention.

### **Access and Security**

- Records shall at all times be protected against unauthorized access and tampering to protect their authenticity and reliability as evidence of the business of Canton.
- No staff member shall remove records that are not available in the public domain from the premises of any Canton offices without the explicit permission of the records manager. Any records removed from the premises should first be scanned to ensure its continuous availability.
- No staff member shall provide information and records that are not in the public domain to the public without consulting the City Clerk/Records Manager. Specific guidelines regarding requests for information are contained in the Open Record Policy.
- No staff member shall disclose personal information of any member of staff or client of Canton to any member of the public without consulting the Director of Human Resources or City Clerk first.

### **Training**

- The Records Manager shall ensure that all staff members are aware of the records management policies and shall conduct or arrange such training as is necessary for the staff to equip them for their records management duties.
- This policy shall be reviewed on a regular basis and shall be adapted appropriately to ensure that it meets the business and service delivery requirements of the City of Canton.

### **Authorization**

This policy was approved by Canton City Council on [date].

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The Code of Ordinances of the Canton Georgia  
Sec. 2-440. - Records management policy.

The City Council adopts all applicable State law regarding municipal records management plans and records retention. The City Clerk shall manage the city's records and is authorized to act for and on behalf of the mayor and city council in directing and coordinating all records management matters under the Georgia Records Act, O.C.G.A. § 50-18-90 et seq., and records retention schedules approved by the State. No record shall be destroyed except as authorized by the state records retention schedule. (Code 1985, § 2-4-2; Code 2002, § 2-167)

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*O.C.G.A. § 50-18-102*

GEORGIA CODE  
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\*\*\* Current Through the 2015 Regular Session \*\*\*

TITLE 50. STATE GOVERNMENT  
CHAPTER 18. STATE PRINTING AND DOCUMENTS  
ARTICLE 5. STATE RECORDS MANAGEMENT

O.C.G.A. § 50-18-102 (2015)

§ 50-18-102. Records as public property; disposing of records other than by approved retention schedule as misdemeanor; person acting under article not liable

(a) All records created or received in the performance of duty and paid for by public funds are deemed to be public property and shall constitute a record of public acts.

(b) The destruction of records shall occur only through the operation of an approved retention schedule. The records shall not be placed in the custody of private individuals or institutions or semiprivate organizations unless authorized by retention schedules.

(c) The alienation, alteration, theft, or destruction of records by any person or persons in a manner not authorized by an applicable retention schedule is a misdemeanor.

(d) No person acting in compliance with this article shall be held personally liable.

**HISTORY:** Ga. L. 1972, p. 1267, § 7; Ga. L. 1975, p. 675, § 7.