

December 2022

US Record Retention Policy

POLICY OWNER:	Legal Department
POLICY APPROVED BY:	President & COO, Office of the Chief Operating Officer
POLICY CONTACT:	Contracts and Document Control Lead, contracts@water.org

Policy Contents

- I. [Policy Overview](#)
- II. [Policy](#)
- III. [Approval and Responsibilities](#)
- IV. [Additional Resources](#)
- V. [Appendices](#)

I. Policy Overview

Policy Statement

It is the policy of Water.org to maintain complete and accurate records in accordance with all applicable legal and regulatory guidelines. No employee is to dispose of a record before the retention period expires. Failure to preserve records in accordance with this policy can result in possible civil and criminal sanctions against Water.org. and its officers and employees, and possible disciplinary action against responsible individuals (including but not limited to termination).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish standard criteria for maintaining and disposing of organizational records. All retention periods comply with either best practice, or regulatory guidelines, and may be adjusted to comply with new regulations.

Applicability

- This policy applies to the retention and disposal of any physical or electronic record of Water.org.
- Any document that is no longer being used in business operations, or a contract or agreement that has expired, is a copy of record.
- Unless otherwise indicated in the Retention Schedule, all retention periods listed on the Retention Schedule (Appendix A) apply once the document becomes a copy of record.
- Any document being utilized in business operations is considered an active record and should be retained.

Governance

The **Legal Department** is the owner of this policy and is responsible for administering, reviewing, and making recommendations for updates or changes to this policy in alignment with business needs.

Violations

It is the expectation of Water.org that direct supervisors proactively manage their direct reports' compliance with this Policy. Non-compliance, from an employee or a direct supervisor, may result in progressive disciplinary actions consistent with the organization's established HR procedures.

II. Policy

This policy establishes standard criteria for maintaining and disposing of organizational records. All retention periods comply with either best practice, or regulatory guidelines, and may be adjusted to comply with new regulations.

1. Guidelines and Processes for Retaining Records

Immediate steps to take once a document becomes a copy of record:

- Use Appendix A to identify the steward for the record.
- Follow the retention period as listed in Appendix A.
- Retain any relevant supporting documentation, and the official copy of the document together.
 - Emails, and other internal memoranda, should be stored with the project or document they support and not in one individual's email.
- All duplicate copies, also referred to as convenience copies, are to be discarded immediately.

If a record does not clearly align with any of the categories listed on the Retention Schedule, use the following guidelines to determine whether to retain the record or dispose of it:

- What is the business need for retaining the document?
- What is the risk to the organization if we were to not have access to the record any longer?
- Does the record have legal implications or business continuity value for the organization?
- If uncertain, consult the legal department.

Dos + Don'ts Guidelines:

- **Do not** keep temporary materials such as drafts, reminder notes, work sheets or extra copies.
- **Do not** hang onto organizational documents for sentimental reasons. All retained documents should be relevant to business continuity processes.
- Emails are considered documents of record:
 - **Do** regularly discard / delete emails that do not pertain to active projects.
 - **Do** save emails that are, or that support, a document that has an established retention schedule. Place the email, or supporting email with the document, in the copy of record and discard / delete the email from your personal email.
 - **Example –** *If there is an email thread that contains recommendations from legal counsel regarding a contract, save the email as a pdf and place with the executed contract as supporting documentation. Do not use a personal, or shared email as the storage site of the legal recommendations for the contract.*
 - You can right click to delete the attachment if you would like to keep the email
 - **Do** permanently retain emails that address non-routine matters, or might have lasting significant consequences

- **Do not** retain files, or documents, in your email that contain personal identifying information for individuals other than yourself (e.g., *date of birth, passport number, driver's license number, gender, age, home address, or personal phone number*).

2. Suspension of Record Disposal

When litigation, an audit, or an investigation is anticipated, Water.org will take reasonable steps to actively preserve evidence and maintain any records that may be discoverable in the litigation or relevant to the audit or investigation. Board Directors, Executive officers, employees, or volunteers of Water.org who become aware of any actual, threatened, or anticipated legal proceeding against, or investigation of, Water.org must promptly notify the Legal Department (contracts@water.org) or other appropriate officer so that all records with potential relevant to the legal proceeding or investigation can be preserved pending further determination. Records that may be needed in connection with pending litigation or other disputes in which some future proceedings can reasonably be anticipated should not be disposed of. If a legal matter arises that requires the suspension of record disposal, the appropriate steward will be notified immediately to cease all record disposals. All employees are expected to comply with the suspension until informed otherwise.

3. Retention Schedule – attached as Appendix A

- The retention schedule is outlined in Appendix A.
- Unless otherwise indicated, all retention periods, represented in years, begin once the document is no longer being actively used and has become a copy of record.
- Water.org may adjust the retention periods defined in Appendix A from time to time to better reflect best practice or to reflect new legal requirements, as necessary.

III. Approval and Responsibility

Please refer to Appendix A to see the detailed list by record type, steward (responsible department), and retention period. All retention periods listed comply with either best practice, or regulatory guidelines, and may be adjusted to comply with new regulations.

IV. Additional Resources

Contact for Support

If you have questions regarding this document, please contact the Legal department at contracts@water.com.

V. Appendices

[Appendix A | US Record Retention Schedule](#)