

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
FOOD SAFETY AND INSPECTION SERVICE  
WASHINGTON, DC

# FSIS DIRECTIVE

2620.1  
Revision 5

9/29/15

## FSIS RECORDS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

### I. PURPOSE

This directive provides instructions for the uniform filing and disposal of FSIS records. In addition, this directive assigns responsibilities to FSIS employees for carrying out the mission of the FSIS records management program. This directive was revised to update the specific employee responsibilities for records management and provide guidance on the maintenance, retention, and disposition of electronic mail records.

#### KEYPOINTS

- *There are 4 types of official records: permanent records, temporary records, non-records, and transitory records*
- *Agency records are to be accessible, legally sufficient, reliable, and legally compliant*
- *It is the responsibility of all FSIS employees to practice responsible records management*
- *When electronic mail is retained as a Federal record, it is the responsibility of the FSIS employee to properly maintain that record*

### II. CANCELLATION

FSIS Directive 2620.1, Revision 4, Records Management Program, 11/11/15

FSIS Directive 2620.3, Identifying Records Management Liaison (RML), 11/13/13

### III. BACKGROUND

A. In accordance with [41 U.S.C., Chapter 31](#), *The Federal Records Act of 1950*, Federal agencies are to make and preserve records containing adequate and proper documentation of their organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions. These records are public property and are to be managed according to applicable laws and regulations.

B. Records serve a number of purposes including: administrative and program planning needs, evidence of Agency activities, protection of legal and financial rights, facilitate the oversight of Congress and other authorized agencies, documentation of the Agency's history, and the continuation of key functions and activities in the event of an emergency or disaster. Records serve as the Agency's memory. They are of critical importance in providing that the Agency continues to function effectively and efficiently.

C. [The Federal Records Act](#) also states that agencies are to establish a records management program that is defined as a planned, coordinated set of policies, procedures, and activities needed to manage its recorded information. The FSIS records management program is directed and coordinated by the Office of Administrative Services (OAS), Information Management and Analysis Branch (IMAB). IMAB serves as the liaison between FSIS and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and develops and

disseminates records schedules that establish the lifecycle of records. IMAB trains FSIS employees on the functions of the records management program (See section IX).

#### IV. IDENTIFYING RECORDS

A. Records include all books, papers, maps, photographs, machine-readable materials, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by an agency of the United States Government under Federal law in connection with the transaction of public business.

B. There are four types of records:

1. **Permanent Records.** Records appraised by NARA as having sufficient historical or other value to warrant continued preservation by the Federal Government beyond the time they are needed for administrative, legal, or fiscal purpose;
2. **Temporary Records.** Records approved by NARA for disposal, either immediately or after a specified retention period. They are also called disposable records or nonpermanent records; and
3. **Non-records.** U.S. Government-owned documentary materials excluded from the legal definition of records for not meeting the requirements of that definition. Non-records include extra copies of documents kept only for convenience of reference, stocks of publications and of processed documents, and library or museum materials intended solely for reference or exhibition.
4. **Transitory Records.** Transitory records are those records of short-term interest which have no documentary or evidentiary value and normally need not be kept for more than 90 days.

#### V. PRESERVING AND MAINTAINING RECORDS

A. FSIS records are the property of the Federal government, not the property of individual employees, and are not to be removed from the USDA without proper authority. All employees shall maintain records and non-record documentary materials separately from one another. Proper separation of personal papers is essential to ensure the security and integrity of Federal records. [18 U.S.C. 2071](#), *Concealment, Removal, or Mutilation Generally*, provides for the assessment of criminal penalties for the unlawful removal, transfer, or destruction of Federal records.

B. FSIS employees are to properly preserve and maintain official records as outlined in the [Records Management Handbook](#) in the event that they are to be shared with other entities. Regardless of the type of media, records are to be:

1. **Accessible.** The content or substance of the record, including the content or substance of the transaction, the processing of the transaction, the identities of the parties and specific individuals involved, and the intent of the parties, is to be accessible for the life of the record, despite changes to hardware, software, or business procedures;
2. **Legally Sufficient.** When a transaction must contain a signature in writing in order to be legally enforceable, care is to be taken to ensure that documentation provides a record that is not subject to imperfect memory or competing claims as to what parties to the transactions intended;
3. **Reliable.** Records in any media must be sufficiently reliable and persuasive to satisfy courts and others who must determine the facts underlying agency actions; and
4. **Legally Compliant.** The methods used to obtain, send, disclose, and store information must comply with applicable laws, such as those governing privacy, confidentiality, recordkeeping, and accessibility to persons with disabilities.

C. All FSIS records are to be listed and described in an approved records schedule and are to be disposed of according to that schedule. Record schedules outline how to maintain the Agency's operational records and what to do with them when they are no longer needed for current business. The disposition instructions state whether individual series of records are "permanent" or "temporary," as well as how long to retain the records. IMAB maintains FSIS record retention and disposition schedules. It is the responsibility of the Records Management Liaisons (RML) within each program area office to annually review the records schedules to ensure that they are current.

## **VI. PROGRAM AREA OFFICES AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT LIAISONS**

A. Each FSIS program area office is to identify a RML within the respective program area office who is responsible for records management. Larger program area offices may have several RMLs. IMAB provides targeted training and updated information on records management to all RMLs.

B. Once the RMLs are identified, they are to perform the following actions for their program area office:

1. Coordinate the records management activities for their program or office;
2. Direct that designated employees within their program area office close out records and transfer or destroy inactive records according to the appropriate records schedule;
3. Cooperate with IMAB in responding to requests for information and in the implementation of a records management program. IMAB may conduct periodic audits and evaluations of Agency administrative, program, vital, and disaster recovery records management functions;
4. Notify IMAB of organization or program changes that will result in the establishment of new types of records, the transfer or termination of records no longer required, or an increase or decrease in the retention time of the records and obtain NARA approval when necessary;
5. Notify IMAB when planning future electronic systems containing records, new applications, or substantial modification to existing systems or to applications for records maintenance and disposition;
6. Develop file plans and procedures to organize and retrieve records when needed. File plans are comprehensive outlines that include the records series title, file organization, active file locations, file transfer instructions, file retention and disposition instructions, and other specific instructions that provide guidance for effective management of records, including vital records;
7. Preserve any unscheduled records (e.g., records not covered under an approved Agency record schedule) and inform IMAB of their existence; and
8. Record destruction of files in accordance with approved records schedules.

C. The RML will serve as the liaison between his or her program area office and IMAB. The program area offices are to submit new or revised RML contact information to IMAB at the beginning of each fiscal year. Each program area office is to provide the following information for each assigned RML to IMAB at [Recordsandmail@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:Recordsandmail@fsis.usda.gov):

1. Program area office;
2. Employee name;
3. Employee email address;

4. Employee telephone number; and
5. Employee address, including building and room number.

## **VII. MAINTAINING ELECTRONIC MAIL RECORDS**

A. In accordance with [DR 3080-001](#), *Records Management*, all employees are to determine whether electronic mail is a Federal record. The sender and the employee who receives electronic mail each independently determine whether the message and its attachments meet the definition of a Federal record for their office. The following are examples of electronic mail that constitute Federal records:

1. Electronic mail that contains substantive information that is necessary to adequately and properly document the activities and functions of FSIS;
2. Electronic mail that provides key substantive comments on a draft action memorandum if the electronic mail message adds to a proper understanding of the formulation or execution of FSIS action;
3. Electronic mail that provides documentation of significant FSIS decisions and commitments reached orally (person-to-person, by telecommunications, or in conference);
4. Electronic mail that conveys information of value on important FSIS activities if the electronic mail message adds to a proper understanding of FSIS operations and responsibilities;
5. Electronic mail that documents the formulation and execution of basic policies and decisions;
6. Electronic mail that documents important meetings;
7. Electronic mail that denotes actions taken by FSIS officials in order to assist their successors in their responsibilities; and
8. Electronic mail that protects the financial, legal, and other rights of FSIS, and of persons directly affected by the FSIS actions.

B. Electronic mail determined to be Federal records falls into three categories: permanent records, temporary records, and transitory records (See section IV. B.). Transitory electronic mail includes:

1. Routine requests for information or publications and copies of replies which require no administrative action, no policy decision, and no special compilation or research for reply;
2. Originating office copies of letters of transmittal that do not add any information to that contained in the transmitted material, and receiving office copy if filed separately from transmitted material;
3. Quasi-official notices including memoranda and other records that do not serve as the basis of official actions, such as notices of holidays or charity and welfare fund appeals, bond complaints, and similar records;
4. Records documenting routine activities containing no substantive information, such as routine notifications of meetings, schedules of work-related trips and visits, and other scheduling related activities; and
5. Suspense and tickler files or "to-do" and task lists that serve as a reminder that an action is required on a given date or that a reply to action is expected, and if not received, should be traced on a given date.

## VIII. RETENTION AND DISPOSITION OF ELECTRONIC MAIL RECORDS

- A. When electronic mail is retained as a Federal record, the retention period is governed by the appropriate Agency records schedule. Temporary records are kept for defined periods of time pending destruction and permanent records are transferred to the NARA for permanent preservation. Electronic mail users who are uncertain about the disposition of electronic mail messages are to contact their RML or IMAB for assistance.
- B. If an electronic mail item, either sent or received, is a Federal record, it is the responsibility of the FSIS employee to ensure that a copy is preserved by making it a part of the official program files of FSIS (i.e., employees should not use Outlook as a recordkeeping system) unless it is a transitory record.
- C. Besides the text of the electronic mail message, electronic mail systems may provide records transmission and receipt data. Transmission data (such as the identity of the sender and addressees, and the date on which the message was sent) must be preserved with all electronic mail items defined as Federal records. Just as with a paper record, this transmission data is necessary for an electronic mail record to be complete and understandable.
- D. Electronic mail systems may also provide users with the ability to request acknowledgments or receipts showing that an electronic mail message reached the mailbox or inbox of addressees and was accessed. Electronic mail users are to request receipt data when it is needed for adequate and proper documentation of agency activities, especially when it is necessary to confirm that an electronic mail message was received and accessed. In such instances, receipt date associated with the record copy of the electronic mail message will be preserved.
- E. When the recordkeeping copy of an electronic mail message is maintained on paper, the printed electronic mail message with attachments will be annotated to document that it is the official file copy before being placed in the official files of the responsible organization.
- F. The procedures in this directive apply to electronic mail received from non-governmental and other outside sources, (e.g., through the Internet or other commercial network services) as well as other Government emails.

## IX. QUESTIONS

- A. Additional information, guidance, and training materials are available on the records management [FSIS Intranet site](#). FSIS record retention and disposition schedules are available in the [Records Management Handbook](#) section.
- B. Direct all questions pertaining to the records management program to [RecordsandMail@fsis.usda.gov](mailto:RecordsandMail@fsis.usda.gov).



Assistant Administrator  
Office of Policy and Program Development