

Disposal Schedules

Introduction

When to use

Use this guide to find information on:

- disposal schedules and how they work
 - retention periods – how long we can keep records
 - what disposal means
 - what a Disposal Authority is
 - why we need a new Disposal Authority
 - our obligations under the [Public Records Act 2005](#) and [Privacy Act 2020](#) when keeping or disposing of records.
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What is a disposal schedule?

Overview

A disposal schedule is a document that sets out:

- all the types (classes) of records and information an organisation holds
 - how long to keep each type of record
 - what happens to the record at the end of that time period.
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Why do we need a disposal schedule?

Legal requirement

Under the [Public Records Act 2005](#), public sector organisations such as Fire and Emergency New Zealand are not allowed to dispose of any records or information unless they have [Disposal Authority](#) from the Chief Archivist of New Zealand.

To get Disposal Authority, public sector organisations must:

- develop a disposal schedule
 - get it approved by the Chief Archivist of New Zealand.
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What information is in a disposal schedule?

Overview

Disposal schedules can look like complicated documents if you've never come across one before.

This information they contain is divided into classes and subclasses.

Classes

Classes are groups of related records. In our draft disposal schedule we have identified 14 different classes of records and information:

- Class 1 Emergency management
 - Class 2 Asset management
 - Class 3 Providing built environment advice
 - Class 4 Community education and marketing
 - Class 5 Managing safety and wellbeing
 - Class 6 Development and learning
 - Class 7 Human resources management
 - Class 8 Dispute resolution scheme management
 - Class 9 Independent complaints service management
 - Class 10 Levy management
 - Class 11 Research and evaluation services
 - Class 12 Strategic relationship management
 - Class 13 Governance and strategic management
 - Class 14 Organisation management
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Subclasses

Each class is divided into subclasses. Each subclass has its own:

- title
- unique reference number
- description of the records that are included in it.

Each subclass is divided into columns.

Columns

Each sub-class is divided into columns with information about:

- trigger points
 - retention periods
 - final disposal actions.
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Trigger point

What is a trigger point?

The trigger point is the time or event when the record is no longer active or is considered closed.

For example, when a firefighter leaves the organisation, their personnel file becomes inactive.

After the trigger point, the retention period begins.

Retention period

What is a retention period?

The retention period is the minimum length of time we must keep a record after the trigger point.

Each type of record has a different retention period depending on:

- the information's value
- how long we might need to keep referring to it.

Minimum retention period

All retention periods recommended in the disposal schedule are minimum retention periods. This means we must not dispose of information or records until after the minimum retention period has finished.

For example, we are proposing that we must keep firefighter personnel files for a minimum of 10 years after the firefighter leaves the organisation.

Disposal

How do we dispose of records or information?

Once the business no longer needs information or records, we dispose of them in one of two ways:

- Destroy them
- Transfer them to Archives New Zealand.

This applies to both hard copy (paper) and digital records

When do we dispose of records or information?

We must only dispose of information or records after the minimum retention period has ended.

Note: We can only dispose of records if we have permission in a [Disposal Authority](#)

Checks before disposing of records or information

We don't automatically dispose of information and records at the end of the retention period. First, we review whether they're still needed for business, legal or accountability purposes. We can then continue to retain them if there is a genuine business need to do so.

What is a Disposal Authority?

Permission to dispose of records

Permission to dispose of records is granted through a Disposal Authority. The Chief Archivist grants Disposal Authorities, usually for a period of 10 years.

A Disposal Authority is an ongoing legal agreement between Fire and Emergency and Archives New Zealand about:

- how long we must keep our records and information
- what will happen to them when we no longer need them for business or operations.

Why do we need a new Disposal Authority?

It's a legal requirement

As we're a crown entity, the [Public Records Act 2005](#) requires us to have a Disposal Authority.

Our previous Disposal Authority has expired	<p>Our previous Disposal Authority expired in August 2022.</p> <p>As we inherited it from the New Zealand Fire Service, it wasn't created for Fire and Emergency, so it wasn't fit for purpose for our current organisation. For this reason, we've decided to create an entirely new disposal schedule that fits our current functions and activities and the records we create.</p>
To help us manage our records properly	<p>We need a current Disposal Authority to ensure we properly handle and manage all the information we hold, including important information about our firefighters and operational functions.</p>
To manage a large volume of information	<p>Like any organisation, we continuously produce large volumes of information and records. Most of this is in a digital format. For financial and privacy reasons, we can't keep these records forever. At the end of their active lifecycle, we transfer some records to Archives New Zealand for permanent retention, and send others for secure destruction.</p>

How do we decide which records to send to Archives New Zealand?

Selection criteria	<p>When deciding which records to retain as public archives, we use the selection criteria and principles of archival selection in Archives New Zealand's Public sector archival selection statement.</p> <p>We consider different perspectives, including those of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • information owners, creators and contributors • subjects of the information and records • current and future users.
Value of the information	<p>We also need to decide whether the records' enduring value to the people of New Zealand clearly outweighs the cost to the taxpayer of ongoing management.</p>

Public records and the Privacy Act 2020

Which records are public records?	<p>When a public sector organisation creates or receives records while carrying out its functions and activities, those records are considered public records. They are subject to the requirements of the Public Records Act 2005.</p>
Records that contain personal information – our obligations under the Privacy Act 2020	<p>Some of these public records may contain personal information about individuals.</p> <p>If a public record contains personal information, that doesn't mean that those records are available to the public. It just means that we aren't allowed to dispose of them unless we have a Disposal Authority from the Chief Archivist.</p> <p>We still have to meet all of the requirements under the Privacy Act 2020 for the care and protection of personal information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We can't release records containing personal information to anyone who asks. • We need to make sure those records are accurate and protected from unauthorised access. • We need to make them available to the person the information is about.

**Access restrictions
on transferred
records**

We know it can be uncomfortable to learn that some public records about individuals have been recommended for transfer to Archives New Zealand. We want to provide assurances that this does not mean those records, e.g., personnel files, will be available to the public. When we transfer those records, we'll clearly assign access restrictions to them, which Archives New Zealand will uphold.
