

Records Management Strategy 3: filing documents and records

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 Responsible work team: **IM Document Management**

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The records management strategy says "records should be kept for as long as they need to be and no longer". Although not all documents are records, the principles outlined in this policy should be followed for filing documents as well as records.
- 1.2 This policy sets out when and how to file/store documents and records. It covers saving electronic documents and where it is still necessary in paper files. Shared network drives are not a secure place to store records and should no longer be used, advice for saving documents in our Document Management System (DMS) SharePoint, should be sought from ICT.

DMS (SharePoint) users

- 1.3 All staff now have access to SharePoint and other Office 365 services. Records management functionality is being added to these applications allowing the storage of electronic records in a secure way that satisfies the Brigade's records management strategy. It is not necessary to maintain paper files or to print electronic records for storage as a paper record. Only the following records need to be kept in original paper form:
 - Originals required for legal reasons (e.g., signed contracts).
 - Those where it has not been possible to scan into SharePoint and therefore not available electronically.
 - Those where a user has not been able to complete the steps outlined in paragraph 4.3 of this policy.

2 DMS (SharePoint) records

What is a document management system (DMS)?

- 2.1 A DMS enables easy search and retrieval of electronic documents and provide the ability to integrate documents into a workflow. It is essential for the Brigade to manage both paper and electronic records; a document management system will not do this on its own.
- 2.2 The DMS records management facility (when implemented) will allow the management of records both electronically and in paper form. The system will control who has access to records, where they are stored and how long they are kept. It will also make searching for records easier. Put simply, it will automate the whole records management process.

Most records can be stored electronically

- 2.3 If a document is a corporate record i.e., it is evidence of an activity that is carried out, or a decision that has been made as part of the work of the office, this needs to be considered carefully.
- 2.4 If a record does not need to be retained in original form for reasons outlined in paragraph 1.3 of this policy, it can be held electronically in the DMS. The records management functionality, along with security measures already in place in some DMS solutions (my employment and fire safety case file) will ensure the following:
 - SharePoint maintains older versions of documents providing an audit trail of changes to the document.
 - That your methods of filing electronic records are sufficient to retrieve files easily - electronic records need to be managed as effectively as paper records.
 - That records are still retained and disposed of in line with guidelines.

- That only those that need access to documents are able to open them.
- That adequate backup facilities are available, so that important documents are not lost in the event of computer problems.
- That procedures for creating and preserving documents (including scanning) are properly documented, so that it can be demonstrated that the document is what it purports to be (especially if it may be the subject of legal dispute).

3 Creating DMS (SharePoint) documents/records

- 3.1 The following general guidelines should be used in the absence of satisfactory local arrangements. Appropriate profiling of records is the responsibility of each member of staff, ideally the recipient or generator.
- 3.2 With the exception of some of our Corporate SharePoint systems, most SharePoint records no longer require extensive metadata (information about the record, for example, a Classification or Content Type). Careful and descriptive naming and creation of appropriate Libraries (and folders if used) should enable the records to be easily filed and located with the improved search facility now in SharePoint. Think carefully when naming libraries, folders, and documents, avoid generic terms and think what you and others might expect to include in a search in the future.

4 Filing paper records

What to file

- 4.1 The requirement to keep papers records is now rare although there are exceptions (see para 1.3) The records management strategy says that a record is "any piece of recorded information created, received or maintained by a person or organisation, which provides evidence of their day-to-day activities." It also says, "Only documents that provide evidence of the Brigade's activities and decisions are records."

When and who does record filing

- 4.2 The following general guidelines should be used in the absence of satisfactory local arrangements:
- The physical filing of records is the responsibility of each member of staff, ideally the recipient or generator.
 - Any records put into a central or shared filing tray should include a file code or be clearly marked with the file name on the top right hand corner of the papers.
 - If arrangements are made for one person to do all the filing, it should not be made their responsibility to decide which files the records should go on.
 - If records are put out for filing without being clearly marked, they should be returned to whoever put them there with a request for the correct file name or code to be clearly marked on the filing.

Before filing records

- 4.3 Follow these steps before filing a record:
- Sort papers checking the coding/file names.
 - Make the papers fit for long term storage and anything that will deteriorate, e.g., elastic bands or post-its removed.
 - If post-its are integral to the paper – staple them. Paper clips and rubber bands should be replaced by staples.

- Plastic wallets should be dispensed with when placing papers onto a file.
- Faxes printed on roll paper should be photocopied as this is a more stable toner.
- Do not place bulky records in files; request a wallet file to go alongside the file.

Coding and cross referencing

4.4 When marking up records it is important to try and achieve consistency between the different users of the system. Points that may help achieve this and should be considered are;

- Papers that are placed in the filing tray without a reference should be returned to the generator.
- Consideration should be given to the reason you are filing records and why they may need to be retrieved
- Avoid filing solely by title or headed paper as the exact filing subject may not be included.

Document history

Assessments

An equality, sustainability or health, safety and welfare impact assessment and/or a risk assessment was last completed on:

EIA	17/08/08	SDIA	L - 27/02/26	HSWIA	15/05/23	RA	NA
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Audit trail

Listed below is a brief audit trail, detailing amendments made to this policy/procedure.

Page/para nos.	Brief description of change	Date
Page 2	Warning removed.	12/05/2023
Pages 3 & 4	Removed reference to 'Non EDMS users' All staff now have access to SharePoint.	
Throughout	Removed reference to Records Centre and final records. RM functionality will be 'in place' with facility to archive redundant sites. SharePoint now includes previous versions for audit purposes. Removed reference to essential use of metadata. Updated EDMS to DMS (SharePoint) and changed emphasis from paper record keeping to SharePoint/O365.	
Page 5	SDIA updated.	19/05/2023
Page 5	SDIA date updated.	09/03/2026

Subject list

You can find this policy under the following subjects.

Records management	

Freedom of Information Act exemptions

This policy/procedure has been securely marked due to:

Considered by: (responsible work team)	FOIA exemption	Security marking classification