

5 FAH-4 H-300 RECORDS DISPOSITION

5 FAH-4 H-310 DEPARTMENT/FIELD OFFICES/POSTS

*(CT:RMH-6; 03-29-2007)
(Office of Origin: A/ISS/IPS)*

5 FAH-4 H-311 GENERAL

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Records created or received by an office, bureau, or post as documentation of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other essential activities must be managed and preserved in accordance with applicable Federal laws, 5 FAM 400, and this handbook.
- b. Some records are of continuing value and must be ultimately retired to the National Archives. Other records are of temporary value and can be destroyed within an office or kept for certain time periods in the Department's Records Service Center, maintained by OIS/RA/RD, or retired to a Federal Records Center. Posts can temporarily store records at post storage facilities, when space is available.
- c. The life and value of these records is determined by general guidelines published by NARA for the entire Federal Government and the Department's evaluation and determination (subject to NARA approval). The results of this are published as "records disposition schedules" which are mandatory for the retirement and/or destruction of Department records. All active approved schedules for the Department are issued as separate publications. Some schedules for records that are unique or were created for one time only will not be published, but can be obtained from OIS/RA/RD.
- d. In addition to the legal requirements for disposition, sound administrative and security practices dictate that records eligible for disposition be promptly retired, destroyed, etc. These timely actions reduce the

requirement for additional filing equipment and storage within valuable office space.

- e. The dates of records must be verified at a post before shipping records to Washington. Posts can reduce shipping costs if records eligible for destruction within a year are not sent to the Department. Posts are to only retire records that have one year or more remaining before they can be destroyed.

5 FAH-4 H-312 RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECORDS DISPOSITION

5 FAH-4 H-312.1 Program Direction and Implementation

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. The records disposition function for the Department is directed by the Office of Information Services, Records Management Branch (OIS/RA/RD) in the Bureau of Administration. OIS/RA/RD's responsibilities include establishing Department-wide policies and procedures in compliance with Federal laws and governmental regulations, and providing support, training, technical guidance, and records storage services as needed.
- b. Each office or post is responsible for carrying out an active records disposition program in accordance with policy and procedures set forth in this handbook and 5 FAM 400. This includes assigning a responsible person to manage the disposition of records by applying the appropriate records disposition schedules for their organization or section.

5 FAH-4 H-312.2 Review and Audit

(TL:RMH-1 10-30-95)

Periodic review and audit are essential for an effective records disposition program. Since most records are kept on a calendar basis, offices are to review and apply appropriate disposition authorities annually. Offices and posts should also review the appropriate records disposition schedules to determine whether they are still applicable and whether they are to be amended.

5 FAH-4 H-312.3 Post Reporting

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

Posts are required to prepare a Biennial Records Report (BRR). This report is submitted to OIS/RA/RD in even-numbered years. It is imperative that the Department manage its information assets effectively. This report is designed to identify where and what type of records are at posts, their status, and to provide OIS/RA/RD with information used to determine post vulnerability. If no significant changes have occurred since the previous report, the post should state that, and updating the previous report is acceptable. Overseas staffing model (OSM) category 1 and 2 posts need not complete the report.

5 FAH-4 H-313 RECORDS DISPOSITION SCHEDULES

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. The records disposition schedules for the Department and posts, developed by OIS/RA/RD, are in accordance with Federal laws and regulations.
- b. If an office or post determines that a schedule needs to be amended, it asks OIS/RA/RD for a review of the records and appropriate schedule.
- c. Proposed new schedules are drafted by OIS/RA/RD and forwarded to the office(s) or post(s) involved for review and clearance. Upon clearance, the schedules are then forwarded to NARA for final approval by the Archivist of the United States.

5 FAH-4 H-314 DISPOSITION OF RECORD CATEGORIES

5 FAH-4 H-314.1 Central Files

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Central files may contain a variety of records that cover different types of disposition time periods and methods of destruction. The person responsible for the file must see that the portions of the records disposition schedules for the Department relating to the central files are accurate. If they are not

accurate, then they contact OIS/RA/RD for corrections.

5 FAH-4 H-314.2 Chronological Files

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Chronological files are normally destroyed when one year old. Exceptions to the rule are the Principal Officer files in the Department and at overseas posts, as explained in the Department's records disposition schedules.

5 FAH-4 H-314.3 Program Files

5 FAH-4 H-314.3-1 General

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Program files will cover different disposition time periods and methods of destruction. The person responsible for the files must see that the office or post records disposition schedules relating to the program files are accurate.

5 FAH-4 H-314.3-2 Posts

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Generally, at a post, only those records relating to foreign policy are retired to the Department; however, in some cases other records that have a long retention period, but are not permanent, can be retired.

5 FAH-4 H-314.4 Electronic Files

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Disposition of records depends on the information contained within the electronic record. Records disposition must be established and approved for any automated system. Personnel responsible for managing electronic files can consult with OIS/RA/RD for guidelines.
- b. Offices and posts, as a routine procedure, create a "backup" copy of all electronic records for the sake of efficiency in case of an emergency or equipment maintenance problem. These backup copies must be clearly marked as such with a corresponding date of creation and planned date of erasure. How an office or post backs up its files is a determination

made by the local systems administrator or other responsible person. In making this determination, costs, burden on resources, potential for damage to the system due to environmental problems, and vulnerability and value of the data are to be taken into consideration.

5 FAH-4 H-314.5 Records On Microfilm

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Paper or electronic records, in most cases, can be destroyed when converted to microfilm. Thus, the microfilm becomes the record copy. A disposition schedule is needed for both the paper and the microfilm version of the records.

5 FAH-4 H-314.6 Top Secret Documents

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

These guidelines apply only to Top Secret material and not to other classifications.

5 FAH-4 H-314.6-1 Department Offices

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Top Secret records maintained by Department offices are retired in accordance with the appropriate records disposition schedule for related program files.

5 FAH-4 H-314.6-2 Posts

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Whenever possible, Top Secret documents are downgraded so that they may be interfiled with related records in either the centralized files or program files.
- b. With the approval of the Principal Officer, the Top Secret Control Officer, and the Section Officer concerned, documents which cannot be downgraded and which are no longer needed for current operations may be destroyed provided that record copies are maintained either in the Department, other Federal Agencies, or other posts. As a general rule, the following types of Top Secret documents may be destroyed, unless they form an integral part of a subject or case file:

- (1) Serially numbered communications sent to or from the Department;
- (2) Reproduced copies of correspondence from the Department or information copies from other posts;
- (3) Briefing books, except those bearing significant written notations or comments;
- (4) National Security Council documents, unless other disposition is required by the originating agency; and
- (5) Intelligence reports originating in the Department or other Federal agencies.

5 FAH-4 H-314.7 Captioned Documents

5 FAH-4 H-314.7-1 General

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Limited Distribution (LIMDIS) and State Distribution only (STADIS) communications are filed with related program material and disposed of in accordance with the records disposition schedules.

5 FAH-4 H-314.7-2 Posts

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Posts are authorized to destroy telegrams captioned NO DISTRIBUTION (NODIS) or EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTION (EXDIS) when no longer needed for current operations, without reference to records disposition schedules. If such records have not been destroyed by the time the related files are retired to the Department, then the captioned telegrams are destroyed, not retired.
- b. Captioned communications, other than telegrams, which bear NODIS or EXDIS will be forwarded by post to the Executive Secretariat when no longer needed for current operations or when the related block of files have been retired to the Department.
- c. Limited Distribution (LIMDIS) and State Distribution only (STADIS) communications are filed with related program material and disposed of in accordance with the records disposition schedules.

5 FAH-4 H-315 DESTRUCTION

5 FAH-4 H-315.1 General

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. All classified and administratively controlled records, including sensitive but unclassified records, authorized for destruction must be destroyed in accordance with provisions of applicable security regulations and 12 FAM .
- b. Sensitive but unclassified records contain information that could prove embarrassing or detrimental to Department or post operations if the information were to fall into unauthorized hands. These records are:
 - (1) Medical, personnel, financial, investigative or any other information release of which would result in substantial harm, embarrassment, inconvenience, or unfair treatment to any individual;
 - (2) Information relating to issuing or refusing visas or permits to enter the United States;
 - (3) Information that would jeopardize the physical safety of Department facilities, personnel, personnel dependents, and U.S. citizens overseas;
 - (4) Proprietary, trade secrets, commercial or financial information release of which would place a company or an individual at a competitive disadvantage;
 - (5) Information release of which would have a negative impact on foreign policy or relations;
 - (6) Information relating to official travel to locations deemed to have a terrorist threat;
 - (7) Information considered mission critical to an office or organization; and,
 - (8) Information which can be manipulated to commit fraud.
- c. The security regulations, themselves, do not constitute authorization to destroy records—only records disposition schedules authorize destruction. Records are to be bagged and burned or shredded. Unauthorized destruction is subject to criminal prosecution.
- d. Unclassified material authorized for disposal, except as indicated above,

may be destroyed by shredding, bagging and burning, or sold as waste paper. The Department encourages offices and posts to participate in the recycling of unclassified white paper. The disposition of unclassified material is to be carefully handled to see that those documents being sold as waste do not fit the criteria identified, above in 5 FAH-4 H-315.1 b.

- e. Retain all records concerning pending litigation until the litigation has been terminated.
- f. To avoid the inadvertent destruction of records, posts are to segregate them from those files eligible for destruction.
- g. Posts are not to destroy financial records listed below under approved disposition authorities until they have been settled and adjusted by the General Accounting Office, except upon written approval of the Comptroller General of the United States:
 - (1) Claims and demands by the Government of the United States;
 - (2) Claims and demands against the Government of the United States; and
 - (3) Accounts in which the Government of the United States is concerned as debtor or creditor.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2 Posts

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-1 Destruction Log

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

The person responsible for the records must maintain a destruction log. The log contains a brief description of the records, the date of destruction and the volume destroyed. This information is included in the Biennial Records Report (BRR). See 5 FAH-4 H-312.3 for a description of the BRR.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-2 Emergency Destruction and Safe Haven

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. In the event of an extreme emergency or evidence of the possible development of such an emergency, the records of a post may be destroyed according to instructions governing emergency and evacuation.

Where prior knowledge of an impending emergency allows time to safe haven the records, such action is preferred to destruction.

- b. Centralize the storage of all classified records in the IPC where the physical facilities permit.
- c. Emergency actions, involving sending records to “safe haven” or destroying records, include the following:
 - (1) Act in accordance with Emergency Action Plan (EAP), which lists established priorities for destruction or safe haven and persons responsible for actual destruction.
 - (2) For the subject and chronological files belonging to the Chief of Mission and Deputy Chief of Mission and the program files in the Political and Economic Sections, send records for safe haven, whenever possible, rather than destroying them.
 - (3) Do not destroy the following unclassified records. These records are to be sent for safe haven, if possible, otherwise leave them intact at post:
 - (a) Budget and Finance (B&F) records not duplicated in a Regional Administrative Management Center (RAMC) showing outstanding obligations and accounts receivable;
 - (b) Building history files;
 - (c) Deeds and titles of government property;
 - (d) Foreign Service Personnel files;
 - (e) Contract files; and
 - (f) Equipment inventories.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-3 Reporting Emergency Destruction

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Any emergency destruction must be reported to OIS/RA/RD by the Post Records Officer or Administrative Officer as soon as feasible. The notification will include:

- (1) Reason for destruction;

- (2) Volume of records destroyed;
- (3) Type of records;
- (4) Inclusive dates of records; and
- (5) Date of destruction.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-4 Safe Haven

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. At the discretion of the principal officer, the transfer of the post's records to a safe haven may be accomplished with or without activating the Emergency Action Plan.
- b. In accordance with 12 FAH-1 , Emergency Planning Handbook, OIS will coordinate with posts the transfer of classified and sensitive but unclassified material to a safe haven, preferably Washington.
- c. Posts may safe haven records at a nearby post deemed appropriate. Records for long-term retention (more than one year) are sent to the Department for safe haven.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-5 Preparation For Safe Haven

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

When records are to be sent to the Department or a safe haven post, the following procedures must be followed if possible:

- (1) Standard records size storage boxes will be issued to individual offices maintaining records;
- (2) Each office will pack its records and mark the cartons as to their contents; e.g., Panama, 1987, Political Files;
- (3) Notify OIS/RA/RD or the post where the records will be housed. This includes an estimated time for storage and, if storage is to take more than one year, then approval for retirement to the Department's Records Service Center is to be sought.

5 FAH-4 H-315.2-6 Responsibility of Safe Haven Sites

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

Posts serving as safe haven sites are responsible for providing reference service to the post whose records they hold. The records are to be segregated and clearly identified as those being held for safe haven. If after a year, these records are not called for or otherwise used, retire them to the Department. The safe haven post will note on Form DS-693, Records Retirement Transmittal, that the records were for safe haven and the post where the records originated.

5 FAH-4 H-316 ACCIDENTAL DESTRUCTION

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

When records are accidentally destroyed or damaged by fire, flood, or other causes, the office or post immediately notifies OIS/RA/RD. Include in the notification, a brief description of the records, the volume, the date, and the circumstances which resulted in the destruction. See 36 CFR 1228.

5 FAH-4 H-317 TRANSFER

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Transfer means the physical transfer of custody of records from one organization, such as a bureau to another, from one post to another, or from a post to the Department because a function or program has been transferred. Likewise, other agencies may transfer records to the Department. See 5 FAM 431 regarding policies on transfer.

5 FAH-4 H-317.1 Transfer Procedures

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. OIS/RA/RD must be notified of the following transfers:
 - (1) Interorganization and inter-post transfers, including reorganizations;
 - (2) Transfers between Department and post or field office;
 - (3) Transfers to another Federal agency;
 - (4) Transfers outside the Federal Government; and
 - (5) Transfers from private organizations or individuals.

b. The following information is to be included in the notification:

- (1) Organization currently holding the records;
- (2) Organization to receive the records;
- (3) Reason for transfer;
- (4) Volume of records;
- (5) Type of records;
- (6) Inclusive dates of records;
- (7) Security classification;
- (8) Current location of records;
- (9) Proposed location of records; and
- (10) Proposed date of transfer.

5 FAH-4 H-317.2 Management Of Transfers Outside The Department

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

OIS/RA/RD is the only authorized agent of the Department for transferring records from or to another agency, or organization. Offices transferring outside the Department follow the procedures in 5 FAH-4 H-318.4 for packaging and arranging for the physical transfer.

5 FAH-4 H-318 RETIREMENT

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Retirement involves the transfer of semi-active or inactive records from office space to lower cost warehouse space. If certain record categories are only referred to once or twice a year, retirement is to be considered. Records are not to be kept in offices purely on the possibility that they might be needed.
- b. There are several locations where Department records can be retired: the Department's Records Service Center, the Washington National Records Center, the National Personnel Records Center, and one of 14 Federal

records centers.

- c. In Washington, the records transfer is handled by OIS/RA/RSC. Field locations may transfer records to a local Federal Records Center, but notify OIS/RA/RSC of the transfer.

5 FAH-4 H-318.1 Department

5 FAH-4 H-318.1-1 Retirement Record

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

Offices keep a copy of Form DS-693 when retiring their records, in order to facilitate future retrieval (See 5 FAH-4 H-318.4).

5 FAH-4 H-318.1-2 Department's Records Service Center

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

The Department's Records Service Center (RSC) is operated by the Office of Information Services, Records Management Branch (OIS/RA/RD).

5 FAH-4 H-318.1-3 Services Provided by RSC

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. The RSC coordinates and manages the retirement of records and applies disposition authorities according to approved schedules.
- b. The RSC reviews schedules and destroys records when it is appropriate and forwards archival records and records that have other storage requirements to the National Archives or Federal Records Centers.
- c. The RSC assists the Research Branch by providing current status of records disposition activity.
- d. The RSC administers the Department's Vital Records Program, as required by E.O. 10346.
- e. The Research Branch (OIS/IA/RB) will also retrieve records from the Washington National Records Center upon request by an office.
- f. Requests for retrieval are to be directed to (OIS/IA/RB) and provide sufficient information about the records to facilitate retrieval.

5 FAH-4 H-318.2 Post Inactive Storage Areas

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

- a. Whenever possible, inactive records are removed from expensive equipment and space in offices and moved off-site to a storage area. The storage must be free of insects, dampness, vermin, or other environmental problems. Storage cartons or open shelving may be used, and if security permits, certain classified and captioned materials can be stored off-site.
- b. The boxes for off-site storage are marked to include the type of records, date of the records, volume and disposition action and date. A list of off-site records must be maintained by the Post Records Officer. Annually, the records are inspected for determination as to disposition.
- c. Records are never to be stored with furniture and other supplies, to avoid allowing access by unauthorized personnel.

5 FAH-4 H-318.3 Types Of Records To Be Retired

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

Department records authorized for retirement are listed in the records disposition schedules for Department bureaus, offices and posts. They include all records that are permanent or scheduled for destruction in more than one year. If there are any questions, contact OIS/RA/RD.

5 FAH-4 H-318.4 Preparation Of Records For Retirement

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

- a. Department offices and post sections with the systems capability are required to submit information on the retirement of records electronically using the Department's Form DS-693 Records Retirement Form Software. Personnel will contact the Records Management Branch (OIS/RA/RD) for a copy of the software and if assistance or additional information about the software is needed.
- b. Each Department office and post section is responsible for designating a person to retire records and ensuring that the following steps, using Form DS-693, are taken prior to retirement:
 - (1) Records are to be retired in accordance with the appropriate records

disposition schedules. They include all records that are permanent or scheduled for destruction after more than one year.

- (2) Non-record material such as publications, information copies, etc. will be removed from files and destroyed if no longer needed. Files will be subject classified by TAGS/Terms and arranged alphabetically or numerically so that research can be accomplished efficiently. Any finding aids are to be included.
- (3) For electronic records, include the description of the software, the type of computer the records were created on, the date of the information, and any other descriptive information about the content of the records.
- (4) Prepare a separate form for each series of records for retirement. The records identified in the description must be consistent with the records disposition schedule(s). A complete list of the file folders is required under item 10 on Form DS-693. When completed, save, print and transfer the Form DS-693 data to a diskette.
- (5) Identify records involved in litigation by placing a copy of Form DS-1851, Records Label, on each box of the accession. Form DS-693 reflects the appropriate records disposition authority number. Upon resolution of the litigation and receipt of advice from the Office of Legal Advisor, records will resume their normal disposition authority.

5 FAH-4 H-318.4-1 Department

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

- a. Forward one paper copy of Form DS-693, which was produced by using the Department's Form DS-693 Records Retirement Form Software, to the Records Service Center (RSC) for processing. RSC will make arrangements for delivery of boxes upon review and approval of the form and pickup of the records. At the time of pickup, transfer Form DS-693 data to a diskette and place the diskette and a signed copy of Form DS-693 in Box 1. A paper copy of Form DS-693 will be returned to the requesting office indicating the location of the retired records.
- b. Normally, the RSC provides boxes for packing. However, offices with extra large shipments of 100 or more boxes per year are encouraged to purchase boxes from the GSA supply system.

5 FAH-4 H-318.4-2 Posts

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

- a. The person responsible for retiring a group of records transfers the Form DS-693 data, which was produced by using the Department's Form DS-693 Records Retirement Form Software to a diskette and then places the diskette and a signed copy of the completed Form DS-693 in Box 1, prior to shipment. A notification of shipment message is sent to OIS/RA/RSC.
- b. Records must be packed in designated record boxes which are available from the GSA supply system. The stock number for ordering record boxes is 8115-00-117-8249.
- c. Boxes must be sealed with strong tape, such as filament tape. Shipment of less than one cubic foot are to be packed in double envelopes. Cardboard containers or packages must be watertight when ocean transportation is used. When using air transportation, pack records in accordance with military or commercial regulations and procedures.

- (1) Containers are to be numbered in sequence and the relation of each container to the entire shipment, as follows:

Box 1 of 16
AMEMBASSY LONDON

- (2) Address boxes, envelopes or other packages as follows:

OFFICE OF INFORMATION SERVICES
RECORDS SERVICE CENTER (OIS/RA/RSC)
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON, DC 20520-0242

d. Foreign Service National Personnel Records

Inactive personnel folders of Foreign Service National employees are reviewed by the administrative or personnel officer annually and prepared for shipment in accordance with Section 14.5 of the Foreign Service National Personnel Administration Handbook (FSNPAH).

e. Shipment Of Records

Records must be shipped in the most economical manner by the proper security procedures and cost. Top Secret documents must be transmitted via courier accompanied pouches at all times. Follow regional courier instructions for shipping.

f. **Notification of Shipment**

- (1) A notification of shipment must be sent to the Department (OIS/RA/RSC) by either telegram or memorandum, with a copy sent to the US Despatch Agency, if the shipment is handled with onward forwarding to Washington. Include the following information:
 - (a) Date of shipment;
 - (b) Volume of records;
 - (c) Means of shipment;
 - (d) Expected date of arrival; and
 - (e) Whether there is more than one shipment and if so, how many and provide the same information above, 1 through 4, for each shipment.
 - (g) **Shipping Expenses.** Costs for packing and shipping are the responsibility of the post. Post must see costs cover shipment to the final destination.
- (2) If shipping personnel records, send the notification to PER/EX/RR.

5 FAH-4 H-318.5 Donation

(TL:RMH-1; 10-30-1995)

The Office of Information Services (OIS) is the only authorized agent of the Department to donate records to the National Archives. Any office wishing to donate records, contacts OIS/RA/RD and follows the procedures in 5 FAH-4 H-318 regarding retirement.

5 FAH-4 H-319 NOTICE OF INTENT TO DESTROY

(CT:RMH-5; 09-23-2005)

The following instructions apply only to domestic offices—Records Management (OIS/RA/RD) will notify offices of intent to destroy records, using a National Archives Form NA-1301, Notice of Intent to Destroy Records. When it is time, according to the appropriate records disposition

schedule for the Department, to destroy a record that has been stored either in the Department's Record Service Center or at the Washington National Records Center, the originating office is given an opportunity to review the records for relevancy prior to destruction. OIS/RA/RD receives notices and forwards them to the originating bureau or office. Offices have 30 days to respond. If no response is received, then OIS/RA/RD will approve the notice of intent to destroy the records.