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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & MUSEUM
ALASKA STATE ARCHIVES | RECORDS AND INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

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RECORDS MOVE PLANNING

Introduction

Moving records is an essential part of successful office remodels or relocations. Moves often present special challenges to access and security of records, but provide unique opportunities to organize and rethink the way records will be stored and accessed in the future.

While it may be difficult to continue normal daily activities while preparing to relocate, early preparations and strategic planning can mitigate much of the unpleasantness associated with office moves.

Following these move tips will:

- Reduce the volume to move.
- Lower your moving costs.
- Improve control over your information assets.
- Identify confidential materials needing special handling.
- Boost morale and lower stress.

Waiting until after the move can result in:

- Wasted dollars and time.
- Lost, misplaced, or abandoned records.
- Potential security breaches.
- Inadvertent destruction of official records.
- Less productive staff.

As state employees we all have the responsibility to manage our records, whether they are kept permanently or for pre-determined lengths of time. This guidance is designed to help you plan your next move by outlining records management considerations *before* the move, making your relocation more successful and efficient.

1. Assign a move coordinator

The move coordinator should meet with management to discuss move preparation needs, then with representatives from each unit moving to look at what will be needed for them and why. Each unit may want to develop or review their current filing systems or file plans, and update or improve on them before the move begins. If they do not feel they need to develop a file plan, then they will need to develop some method for shelf identification and a method for monitoring the central files retrievals and refiles before moving.

The move coordinator should identify what information or assistance may be provided by the Department Records Officer and the State Archives Records and Information Management Service (RIMS) staff in terms of guidance or training. Additional items to consider include:

- Identifying move dates and which units will move to what spaces.
- Identifying the number of work spaces assigned to each unit.
- Identifying the type of filing equipment designated to each filing room.
- Identifying the number and location of other non-workstation filing equipment.
- Identifying the number or color scheme being used for moving boxes and equipment from the old location to the new location.

2. Devise a timetable

Timetables should include information regarding what steps are needed before the move occurs, the person responsible for those steps, start date, estimated completion date, and any additional notes. Timetables may include:

- Meeting dates with space planners.
- Equipment, supply and furniture orders.
- Record inventory dates.
- Records shred or recycle dates.
- Records Center transfer dates.
- Space planning timelines.
- Unit move dates.
- Unpacking timelines.

3. Plan the new space

Planning your new space gives you a chance to improve the way your records are stored and accessed. As you plan the space, consider the following issues to determine records placement:

- **Usage**—Who will use the records, how frequently, and for what purpose? Are there multiple users?
- **Security**—Records with restricted access or valuable records requiring special protection may require special placement and equipment.
- **Environment**—Some records may require special storage conditions with specific temperature and humidity controls.
- **Central files**—Would your office benefit from having files in a centralized location? If you have a centralized file location, determine the location of:
    - Active records.
    - Inactive records.
    - Non-records, including technical reference materials and duplicate publications and forms.

Did you know?*-Active files typically grow at a rate of 25% annually.*

Other planning considerations include:

- Check engineering drawings to see if floors can support the weight of the records and filing equipment.
- Plan your space to allow for growth—consider your annual accrual rate and plan for the number of active years you need on hand.
- Determine what will be maintained electronically and who will be responsible for maintenance.
- Order the appropriate equipment and verify the order.
- Plan a "reference area" where staff can review records.
- Plan a "staging area" where records can be prepped for filing, disposition, microfilming or scanning.
- Plan space for computers and barcoding equipment, microfilm readers, or other specialized equipment.
- Plan where electrical and telephone outlets need to be for the equipment.
- Plan sufficient space and equipment for oversize items such as maps, or non-paper items such as videotapes, slides or microfilm.

4. Accessibility and security during the move

As government employees, we do not have the luxury of denying public records requests. Nor can we put off litigation requests due to not being able to access our records. This is one of the biggest records challenges during a move. It would be easy to treat boxed records like furniture, but they are not! They require special handling and tracking to make sure information is not lost or misplaced. It is also critical that they remain accessible and secure throughout the move.

Before packing, labeling and inventorying the records, determine your access needs:

- What is the probability of needing access to these records during the packing, move, and unpacking of the files?
- If access will be needed, what indexing information do you need on the labels and inventory listings to aid in access?
- If records need to be accessed, do you have the space and time to allow for the following until move day?
  - Not stacking boxes.
  - Not putting lids on boxes.
  - Not palletizing boxes.

Ensuring security of records during a move is also critical. Knowing your records arrived at the new location is not enough—they need to arrive intact and uncompromised, and this needs to be a verifiable process. In order to ensure security:

- Determine which records are confidential and which are not, including those containing Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and Protected Health Information (PHI).
- Determine and implement any special state of federal requirements needed during the move process.
- Determine if boxes, containers, or trucks need security seals, and develop a process to log and verify the seals.

5. Identify applicable custom and general retention schedules

Be aware that you cannot arbitrarily dispose of records you no longer want. The Alaska State Archives works with each department to identify record series and retention periods, and creates Records Retention Schedules to guide you in the disposition of your records. These retention periods apply to all your records, including paper materials, digital files, and email.

Contact your Department Records Officer to help identify all custom schedules which apply to your unit. Also, review the General Administrative Records Retention Schedule and become familiar with the disposition of routine office records that are probably in your area. In most cases, you may be holding copies of general schedule items that are officially filed somewhere else, making your copies disposable.

Your Records Officer can help you:

- Determine what records are in your unit.
- Identify any Records and Information Management training that may be beneficial for you to take.
- Help you identify official records from copies.

If you know of your move well in advance, take the opportunity to review your current retention schedule and see if it reflects your needs and complies with current state and federal regulations. If changes need to be made to shorten or lengthen retention periods, contact your department Records Officer. Your Records Officer can work with your Division Director and RIMS staff to update the schedule well in advance of your move, possibly allowing additional records to be disposed of if retentions are shortened.

You need a retention schedule revision if:

- The total retention period needs to be lengthened or reduced.
- Your business processes have changed, deeming the records unnecessary.
- Records are not listed on a custom or general schedule.
- Records functions have moved to a different department or unit.

6. Identify records on hand

Moving only what needs to be moved will save time and money, and make it easier to find what you need once you've moved. Inventorying records before the move will help identify which records need to be maintained, what can be disposed of, and which can be moved to an offsite storage vendor.

Remember that not all records are paper. Per AS 40.21.150(6):

> …"record" means any document, paper, book, letter, drawing, map, plat, photo, photographic file, motion picture film, microfilm, microphotograph, exhibit, magnetic or paper tape, punched card, electronic record, or other document of any other material, regardless of physical form or characteristic…

As you go through your record materials, you should identify and decide how to handle:

- Duplicate records.
- Related records.
- Missing files.
- Fragmented records.

For each unit moving, identify the following:

- Who is the records custodian?
- What formats are the records in?
- What is the location of all the records (include work stations, central filing areas, closets, storage areas and empty offices)?
- What are the records? Name the records according to existing Retention Schedule item number and record series titles, and record the volumes of each record series.
- What records are kept in binders or other odd-sized folders?
- What records are past due for destruction?
- Are the records active or inactive?
    - Active records are those you use on a daily basis, and may include items such as open invoices or current contracts.
    - Inactive records are those you do not need on a regular basis, such as completed projects or closed contracts.
- What inactive records can be transferred to the Records Center?
- What records will be needed first after the move?

7. Separate non-records from records

It may seem easier to just box up all the non-record materials in your filing cabinets and book shelves, but the reality is that the costs of your move will be higher. If the materials are not designated records and no longer useful, recycle them before moving.

Non-record materials, including personal papers, duplicate copies of publications or forms, and technical reference material, should be separated and kept apart from official records.

For non-record materials:

- Weed superseded or obsolete items, including technical reference materials.
- Don't keep non-record materials for sentimental reasons—if you have not touched it in over six months, get rid of it!

Non-record materials include:

- Reference materials
- Catalogs
- Newspapers
- Magazines
- Phone books
- Personal papers
- Blank forms
- Publications
- Technical reference materials
- Convenience copies

Once you have separated your record and non-record materials, you will be able to dispose of files per your approved retention schedule, move inactive files to less expensive Records Center storage, and purge your collection of non-record materials.

8. Dispose of copies

It is easy to print out emails received or sent, copies of budgets or contracts, and other documents which exist in digital formats. If you are not the official record keeper for the printouts you have, verify that yours are copies and recycle or shred them. Remember, copies of records are <u>not</u> records and may be disposed of. Copies include:

- Printouts of emails already stored online.
- Printouts of digital documents made for convenience or reference use.

9. Dispose of records that have met their retention

It takes extra time and money to move records that are no longer active and have met their designated retention periods. Moves and reorganizations are great opportunities to dispose of records past their retention date. Before disposing of records, check with the Records Officer and Division Director to identify any items needing to be retained due to ongoing investigations, litigation holds, audits, or pending retention schedule changes.

Did you know?*-On average, 40% of records in offices have met their retention and should be destroyed.*

- Designate a person in each unit to oversee shredding and recycling activities.
- Organize a "Records Purge Day" and contact vendors to provide shred and recycling bins.
- Coordinate the recycle pick up with the Department of Administration facilities recycling schedule.
- Work with the Records Officer to complete a *Certificates of Records Destruction* for all records shredded or recycled.
- Have Records Officers and custodians available on your records purge day to answer questions concerning what records are eligible for destruction.

For permanent records transfers to the Alaska State Archives:

- Contact the Alaska State Archives staff for a consultation on transferring permanent records to the Archives.
- Fill out a *Transmittal Receipt,* inform the Department Records Officer of the transfer, and send the *Transmittal Receipt* to the State Archives staff for review/approval.
- Schedule a shipment or pick up date with State Archives staff.

10. Send inactive records to a Records Center

For records that are no longer active and have not met their authorized disposition date, prepare them for transfer to an approved off-site Records Center. Using off-site Records Centers frees up valuable office space, improves efficiency and productivity, and reduces operational costs.

Did you know?*-90% of records once filed, are never referred to again.*

- Contact the Department Records Officer to find out which Records Center vendor your unit uses.
- If you have not sent records to the Records Center before, establish an account and identify personnel allowed to access records.
- Determine the amount of records being transferred and number of boxes to be ordered.
- Order boxes and labels from the Records Center.
- Separate records into individual record series before boxing up.
- Remove duplicate copies and non-record materials.
- Organize records in a logical order (e.g. alphabetical, chronological, numerical, etc.)
- Box up the records.
  - Pack files in the box with file labels facing the front of the box. Do not overstuff boxes.
  - Pack the files in the same order as they are in the filing cabinets or shelves.
  - Place the barcode label on the front end of the box below the handle.
- Plan extra time to gain approval for transferring records to the Records Center—do not submit it the week you expect the pick up to occur—plan for extra time!
- Complete a *Records Transfer List (RTL)* and submit it to your Records Officer for approval by RIMS staff.
- When the RTL is approved, contact the Records Center to schedule a pick-up or shipment date.

11. Color coding units for moving

When determining placement of records and non-records into new areas, consider assigning a color code for each unit being moved. Color coding can be used by movers and staff to quickly identify locations, and should be used on the box or cart labels to aid in location placement.

Once colors are assigned, determine which areas each unit has materials to move to. The areas may include:

- Work stations.
- Centralized active filing areas.
- Centralized inactive filing areas.
- Non-records areas, including technical reference materials.

12. Change of records custody

If your unit is moving from one department to another, it is important to document the chain of custody from the originating department to the new one. This means that each department has to agree to the transfer of custody of the records. If this is the case, have the current department Records Officer contact the new department Records Officer to make arrangements for the records custody transfer, and to make sure all applicable retention schedules are updated and filed at RIMS.

Records residing in Records Centers must also be addressed. Have your Records Officer contact RIMS staff to arrange custodial transfer of record center boxes to the subsuming department, and to provide copies of Records Transfer Lists for department use.

13. Pack and label boxes and carts

The move coordinator should:

- Determine if boxes or carts will be used to move the records (carts can be shrink wrapped to keep files in place during the move).
- Determine the number of linear or cubic feet of records to be moved and order boxes accordingly.

Records custodians within the units should:

- Prepare files for packing:
  - Identify and separate files according to record series.
  - Place files in the correct order that they should be arranged on the new shelves or filing cabinets.
- Pack files in order within boxes or carts. Do not overstuff boxes as they will not close properly during the move. During the packing process, leave boxes open for accessibility.
- Fill out a color coded box/cart label. At a minimum include the following information:
  - **Box or cart #**—the box or cart # for records in each group in the order they need to be placed (box 1 of 3; cart 2 of 5, etc.).
  - **Contents description**.
  - **Destination**—put the destination location # where records will reside (work station #, filing room, etc.).
  - **Employee name**—if applicable, use the employee name of the work station records are going to, or the person responsible for the records.
  - Central file location—if applicable, include the central file location number, the filing cabinet or shelving unit number, then drawer or shelf number.
- Inventory all boxes for each unit—create an inventory sheet with all the information captured on the labels and include a check off column to be used after records are moved.
- Place label on outside of box under the handle or on the cart near the handle.
- On the day before the move, put lids on the boxes, shrink wrap carts, and palletize boxes if necessary. Color code all carts and pallets.

14. Unpack and organize

- Designate individuals to be present in each unit of the new facility (especially at each central file station) to oversee and coordinate the placement of pallets, boxes or carts into the correct area.
- As records are removed from boxes or carts and placed in filing cabinets or shelves, check off the records from the inventory sheet for that unit. Check to make sure all boxes and carts were received and unpacked.
- Break down boxes and work with the move coordinator to remove empty pallets, carts and moving boxes.

15. Post move—Keep your records organized

Once the move is complete and staff have settled in, take the opportunity to schedule an annual records clean-up day. Dedicate a date and time to:

- Purge obsolete records and non-records.
- Have shred and recycle bins available for destruction.
- Box up inactive records and send them to the Records Center.
- Attend trainings on records management issues.
- Make sure files are in order and document any lost or misplaced information.
- File all interfiles and back-logged items.
- Check filing equipment for functionality.
- Check to see if shelves and cabinets are doing a good job of protecting records from wear and tear.

Hopefully your move inspired you to reorganize your records and improve your access and procedures! Contact RIMS staff at the State Archives for professional advice on records management questions and concerns, recommended improvements to your record keeping practices, and a listing of training dates and subjects.