

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA GENERAL RECORDS SCHEDULES

Introduction

General records schedules are issued by the Office of Public Records to provide disposition standards for records common to several or all agencies of the District government. They include records relating to personnel, fiscal functions, accounting, procurement, printing, space and maintenance, and other housekeeping records. They also cover audiovisual records, maps and architectural plans, records of boards and commissions, administrative management files, and other types of records.

For the most part, general schedules are intended to cover only record copies of documents. Nonrecord material, such as duplicate copies of documents, may be destroyed on agency authority alone. When it is difficult to decide whether files are record or nonrecord materials, the Records Management Officer may call the D.C. Archives for an informal opinion.

Some items in the various schedules have no specific disposition instructions. These records may have differing retention periods depending on the nature of the records or the needs of the agency. They may be permanently valuable and suitable for transfer to the D.C. Archives, but not necessarily so. For these records, agencies are required to submit a request for disposition authority. This request may take the form of (1) inclusion within the agency's records retention schedule, or (2) listing in a *Disposal List* (A Disposal List is a one-time authorization to dispose of records that no longer accumulate and have no further operational or other value). This will allow an individual evaluation of the pertinent records in the context of the office of origin, agency requirements, and possible archival value.

General schedules are developed by the D.C. Archives, and reviewed and approved by the D.C. Archivist, the Public Records Administrator, and the D.C. Records Disposition Committee. Once the Records Disposition Committee has given its final approval to a general schedule, it is mandatory that District employees follow the records disposition instructions embodied in that document. In addition, disposition instructions in a general schedule take precedence over the provisions of any agency records retention schedule unless the Records Disposition Committee has approved an exemption from the terms of the general schedule.

The Office of Public Records encourages agencies to use the disposition authorizations to the greatest extent possible. Because these schedules are designed to cover records common to several agencies, the records descriptions are often general in nature. Agencies are urged to interpret the instructions liberally to maximize the use of the schedules. Agency records management officers should include general schedules as an appendix to their agency schedule or tailor the general schedule's provisions to their agency's own particular needs and incorporate these into the body of their agency schedule.

If for some reason an agency thinks that it should not follow the instructions of a general schedule, it must request a specific exemption from the terms of that schedule from the Records Disposition Committee.

Some records series covered by general records schedules are eligible for transfer to the Records Center or, if designated as *PERMANENT* to the D.C. Archives. For help in arranging the transfer, contact the Office of Public Records on 671-1105.

If you have any questions about general records schedules or other matters relating to official records, contact the Office of Public Records on 671-1108.