

How to prepare and transfer records for off-site storage (Guidance for departments)

Introduction

- 1 Records should be kept within departments only if they are active and frequently required. Records that are no longer required on a regular basis and non-active records, which need to be kept for legal reasons or other business needs, should be transferred to an off-site storage company. They will be stored securely for as long as required, retrieved and returned when necessary, and destroyed in accordance with the retention schedule when no longer required.

- 2 This guide sets out the steps involved in preparing records to be sent off-site. It explains how to:
 - order and assemble cartons (paras 3-4)
 - prepare and pack the records (paras 5-7)
 - add reference codes and destroy dates to cartons (para 8)
 - return unused cartons to the records team (para 9)
 - list the files on the records transfer schedule (paras 10-11)
 - arrange for cartons to be transferred off-site (paras 12-13)
 - retrieve and return records, as required (paras 14-17)
 - calculate costs (para 18)

Please, follow the procedures carefully.

If, in the light of your experience of preparing records for off-site storage, you have any comments or suggestions on how the procedures or this guidance may be improved, please contact the Records Manager (Ext. 6583).

Order, prepare and assemble cartons

3 Order cartons

Please let the records team know approximately how many cartons you will require at least two to three days before you need them.

Cartons come flatpacked in three sizes as follows:

Description	Approx. dimensions	Approx. capacity	Code
Small carton	380 x 280 x 280 mm (15 x 11 x 11")	30 litres (1 cubic ft)	S7030
Standard carton	425 x 355 x 255 mm (17 x 14 x 10")	40 litres (1.4 cubic ft)	S7050
Large carton	405 x 405 x 305 mm (16 x 16 x 12")	50 litres (1.8 cubic ft)	S7060

Please note that a carton, after it has been filled, should not exceed 15 kg.

4 Assemble cartons



Please refer to the illustration on the cartons to assemble them correctly, so that the bottom does not collapse. Correct assembly of the carton is as follows:

Carton

- Step 1 Fold side marked 'A' inside box, ensuring a snug fit against inside wall of carton
- Step 2 Fold sides marked 'B' and 'D' flat against side marked 'C'
- Step 3 Fold sides 'B', 'C' and 'D' up to form bottom of carton
- Step 4 Place carton on flat surface. Lift side 'D' up against carton wall
- Step 5 Lift side 'B' up against opposite carton wall
- Step 6 Push side 'A' down against bottom of carton
- Step 7 Fold top sides inwards starting with the two shortest, ensuring a snug fit against inside walls.

Lid

- Step 1 Raise long sides
- Step 2 Push in short flaps
- Step 3 Raise short sides
- Step 4 Press down into notches

Only make up as many cartons as you actually need.

Unused cartons should be returned flat, so that they can easily be stored.

Prepare and pack the records

5 Tidy up the records

- 5.1 If possible and practical, weed out any records that do not need to be retained. If you are using lever arch or hard copy file covers with metal hinges, transfer the file material into paper 'storage bags' (size 350x248 mm) commonly referred to as 'transfer cases'. These should be ordered from the Distribution department.
- 5.2 Please ensure that papers within folders/files/transfer bags are securely attached; tie up the folder with string if necessary. Loose papers should also be tied in bundles and appropriately labelled, or put into labelled bags or transfer cases.
- 5.3 If required, 'storage bags' (size 390x290 mm) for extra large documents which need to be transferred into large cartons, may also be ordered from the Distribution department.

Lever-arch files, box files or ring binders should not be placed into the cartons. Similarly, the plastic binders for large computer printouts will not fit in the cartons; please remove the binders before boxing.

6 Arrange files by 'destroy date' before placing them into cartons

- 6.1 Please make sure that the records placed in any one carton have the same retention period (i.e. destroy date), as it is not possible, nor practical, for individual files in a carton to be destroyed on different dates. In the unlikely event that files covering different retention periods need to be placed into the same carton, the 'destroy date' should be amended to the 'latest destruction date' of a file within that container.

- 6.2 Your department's records inventory list/retention schedule will indicate how long records must be kept. The retention period is calculated from the latest date of the record in that file (or the file series, if there is more than one volume). You must take into account whether the retention period is stated in calendar or financial years as this will affect the destroy date. If in doubt, consult your department's records lead officer.
- 6.3 Should your department not have a records inventory list/retention schedule, or you have records that have not been included in your retention schedule, please contact the Records Manager (Ext. 6583) for advice.
- 6.4 If you have important records which you consider should be retained permanently for historical, legal, cultural or any other reasons, please consult the Archives Manager (Ext. 6512). A decision will be made whether or not the records warrant permanent preservation and transfer to the National Archives where they will be made available to the public.

7 Place records into cartons

- 7.1 Put files or bundles on its edge, starting from the left side of the box. Cartons should be filled as much as possible, but do not pack them too full. Half-full cartons are not accepted, as they are likely to collapse when heavier cartons are stored on top of them. If there is any unused space in a box, it must be filled with corrugated paper to protect the documents in transit.

Do not sellotape down the box lids – if the lid will not close easily, then the box is too full. Remember, the carton, when full, must not weigh more than 15 kgs.

8 Add the 'department reference code' and 'destroy date' to the cartons

- 8.1 Using a black felt-tip pen, write the 'destroy date' on the side of the carton in the area marked 'Review Date'.
- 8.2 Add the 'department carton reference code' on the side of the box in the area called 'customer reference'. Cartons are numbered sequentially by functional area. The Records Department keeps a log of all the reference codes of cartons stored off-site and can advise you of your next number.
- 8.3 If you have never prepared files for off-site storage, please contact the Records Manager who will allocate an off-site storage code for your function, ensuring that there is no duplication.

Do not write anything else on the cartons.

The 'Customer Cost Centre' and 'Barcode' will be added to the cartons by the records team who will complete the necessary additional documentation, prior to arranging for them to be picked-up and transferred to our off-site storage company.

9 Unused cartons

If you have any cartons left over after you have packed all your records, please return them to the records team.

Listing the records on the Records Transfer Form

10 Records Transfer Schedule

- 10.1 The purpose of the records transfer schedule is to keep a record of the files transferred off-site. The records lead officer in your department is responsible for ensuring that the information entered on the records transfer schedule is accurate and detailed enough to enable records to be retrieved when required. These schedules will be very important in the future when you need to identify records for retrieval.
- 10.2 A blank records transfer schedule is at **Annexe 1**. Please save a copy of this form and complete it, as appropriate, following the example of the completed form at **Annexe 2**. If you have any questions relating to the information to be recorded on this form, please consult your department's records lead officer.

11 Filling in the Records Transfer Schedule

Please complete the various sections of the form as follows:

- 11.1 **Job title and department/directorate:** This should refer to the person who has responsibility for the records, not necessarily the person listing them.
- 11.2 **Barcode:** Please leave this column blank. Barcodes stickers will be affixed to the cartons and their numbers entered on the records transfer schedule by the records team.
- 11.3 **Department Code:** This is your department's carton reference (i.e. the code and number you have written on the outside of the box). It is the unique identifier by which you can retrieve the records, or authorise their destruction, as required.
- 11.4 **Contents and dates:** This should be detailed enough to enable someone else, perhaps in several years time, to identify from your list the records they require. (The departmental file reference may be added in brackets, if required). The content descriptions of each carton should be entered in one cell and must contain the file titles and covering dates of each batch of records.
- 11.5 **Retention period:** The retention period of each carton should be entered in the appropriate cell, next to the content description of each carton.
- 11.6 **Destroy date:** This is the date on which the carton and its contents may be destroyed (ie the 'destroy date' you have written on the outside of the box). If, for any special reason, you require the records to be returned to you for review, you may change the heading on the transfer schedule to '*Review Date*'.
- 11.7 **Object Code:** This relates to the size of the cartons (i.e. S7030, S7050, S7060) which is printed on the outside of the box and should be filled in, as appropriate.
- 11.8 **Number of cartons:** This column lists the number of cartons to be transferred to off-site storage. A maximum of 50 cartons fit into one vehicle at any one time. If you have less than 50 cartons, please delete the empty lines.
- 11.9 The remaining section of the form should be completed as appropriate.

Arrange for cartons to be transferred off-site

- 12 Please send a copy of the records transfer schedule to the Records Manager. The records team will check that all sections of the form have been completed, as required, and process your request. The Records Manager will liaise with Facilities Management regarding arrangements for interim storage until collection can be arranged.
- 13 A copy of the completed records transfer schedule to which additional information has been added (such as the barcode number of each carton and the date on which the cartons were transferred into off-site storage), will be sent to you following collection. Please keep your copy of the lists safely - you may need to refer to them in order to retrieve records, when required.

Off-site storage database

- 14 The information you have provided on the records transfer schedule will be copied onto the NMC's off-site storage database which gives details of all the records held off-site site. It also contains an audit trail of the records that have been authorised for destruction and the date on which they were destroyed. A 'read only' copy of this database will be made available on the Intranet, for reference purposes.

Retrieving and returning records

15 Retrieving records stored off-site

- 15.1 Please identify which cartons you require either by referring to your copy of the records transfer schedule or through a search of the NMC's off-site storage database on the Intranet.
- 15.2 Send an email to the Records Manager, listing the carton reference codes of the records you require. Standard delivery is next working day (if request received before 3.00 pm). Urgent delivery can be arranged (3 hours from time of request) at an additional cost.
- 15.3 If you require the original records which you have retrieved for legal or any other purposes, these can be taken out of the cartons provided they are replaced with photostat copies duly cross-referenced. These records, together with the records relating to any action taken, will then form part of your current records and be subject to the prevailing retention policy for that file. In due course, when this file becomes inactive, it should then be transferred to off-site storage in the normal manner.

16 Returning cartons

- 16.1 Please return the cartons promptly. Notify the Records Manager of the carton reference code(s) of the box(es) to be sent back to the off-site storage company. The records team will complete the necessary documentation and arrange for the cartons to be returned.

17 Permanent removal of records stored off-site

If you need to retain the records permanently, or you decide that they can be scheduled for destruction and do not need to be returned, please inform the Records Manager so that the database may be updated and the carton booked out permanently. This involves an additional cost.

Review of guidance

19 This guidance will be kept under review and updated when necessary.