

## SUBJECT:

**Electronic Communications Retention Policy**

## ORIGINATING DEPARTMENT:

Records Management

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**POLICY:**

Electronic communications generated by Citrus County employees is intended to facilitate County business objectives for employees and other business associates for communications, collaboration, research and/or other work related tasks. The utilization of electronic communications can enhance the productivity of the Citrus County work force.

Electronic communications created or received in connection with the transaction of official business are public records subject to inspection and copying in accordance with Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, and subject to applicable state retention laws and regulations, unless expressly exempted by law. Electronic communications with retention value should be transferred to the County's Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) prior to deletion.

**DEFINITIONS:**

**Electronic Communications:** Include e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging (such as SMS, Blackberry PIN, etc.), multimedia messaging (such as MMS), chat messaging, social networking (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.), or any other current or future electronic messaging technology or device

**Non-Public Records:** Electronic communications created or received for personal use are not generally considered public record and do not fall within the definition of public records simply by virtue of their placement on a government-owned computer system.

**Examples:** Personal e-mails, e-mails from LISTSERVS, SPAM and PHISHING e-mails.

**Public Records:** Are all documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, data processing software, or other material, regardless of physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission, made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business of the County.

**Text message:** A written message which is transmitted electronically, esp. a short, keyed message sent from one mobile phone to another, or via the Internet.

**Thread:** An electronic message conversation of at least one response on a similar subject; the conversation can be broken or continuous over time. Can be facilitated using such electronic message systems as E-mail and text message (SMS).

**Transitory Messages:** are records that are created primarily to communicate information of short-term value. "Transitory" refers to short-term value based upon the content and purpose of the message, not the format or technology used to transmit it. Transitory messages are not intended to formalize or perpetuate knowledge and do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction, or become a receipt.

**PROCEDURE:**

**Retention Requirements for Electronic Communications: E-mail**

1. The use of Citrus County's E-mail system and generation or receipt of E-mails by County employees shall be in compliance with the standards established within the County's Electronic Communications Policy.
2. Records retention is governed by the State of Florida General Records Schedules and administered by the Records Manager. All public records must have an approved retention schedule in place before they can be destroyed or otherwise disposed of.
3. The retention period of any particular electronic message will be the same as the retention for records in any other format that document the same program function or activity. For instance, electronic communications might fall under a CORRESPONDENCE series, a BUDGET RECORDS series, or one of numerous other record series, depending on the content, nature, and purpose of each message
4. Electronic communications that are created primarily to communicate information of short-term value, such as messages reminding employees about scheduled meetings or appointments, might fall under the "TRANSITORY MESSAGES" record series. "Transitory" refers to short-term value based upon the content and purpose of the message, not the format or technology used to transmit it. Examples of transitory messages include, but are not limited to, e-mail messages or other communications reminding employees about scheduled meetings or appointments; most telephone messages (whether in paper, voice mail, or other electronic form); announcements of office events such as holiday parties or group lunches; and recipient copies of announcements of agency-sponsored events such as exhibits, lectures, workshops, etc.
5. Transitory messages are not intended to formalize or perpetuate knowledge and do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures certify a transaction, or become a receipt. The retention requirement for transitory messages is "retain until obsolete, superseded or administrative value is lost." Therefore, electronic communications that fall into this category can be disposed of at any time once they are no longer needed.
6. E-mails and any attachments which are not transitory in nature must be identified according to the General Record Schedules retention guidelines, to ensure quick and efficient recovery under the County's Public Records Policy. The following standards shall be utilized to address that requirement.
  - (a) E-mail generated by staff which is specific to a project or case shall include the permit number, case number or project name within the subject line.
  - (b) E-mail received by staff which is specific to a project or case shall be augmented to include the permit number, case number or project name within the subject line.

(c) E-mail shall not contain personal information including ID numbers, home addresses, home phone numbers or personal E-mail addresses, medical information, past, pending or future personal actions or pay information.

(d) E-mail shall not be used as the primary document to set policy or procedure. Policy or procedure shall be reflected in a memo which can be transmitted by E-mail as an attachment.

(e) In the event E-mail is received with confidential or protected information, (HIPPA, public records exemptions) the recipient shall be responsible for vetting said information from a copy of the record, at the time of a public records request.

(f) E-mails deemed to be non-transitory shall be stored within the electronic document management system (EDMS). E-mails that fit the description of item (d) above shall be marked "redact" in the status index field.

7. The E-mail retained shall include the entire thread of all prior dialogue from the initial receipt.
8. E-mail identified as having retention value shall be transferred to the electronic document management system (EDMS) within 45 calendar days of receipt.
9. All E-mail remaining in the E-mail system will be automatically deleted after 45 days from the date received or sent, including email located in folders.
10. All Citrus County E-mail data, including materials created, received or transmitted within the system are the property of Citrus County. Employees should have no expectation of any privacy whatsoever regarding E-mails sent or received.