



Handy Tips for Dealing With Electronic Records

Participant Guide



February 2009

Table of Contents

Welcome	3
Course Overview	5
Identifying Federal Records	7
Maintaining Electronic Records	8
Records Disposition	11
Transferring Records to the National Archives	12
Managing Electronic Mail	14
Final Thoughts on Managing Electronic Records	18
Course Credit	19
Appendices	20
<i>Appendix A – Can You Identify a Federal Record?</i>	21
<i>Appendix B – Instructions for Archiving Your E-Mail</i>	22
<i>Appendix C – What Would You Do With This Message?</i>	24



Welcome

Welcome to today's Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) NPS course titled, *Avoiding the Looming Black Hole: Managing Electronic Records for Now and the Future*. This three-hour class will consist of live instruction via TEL from the US Fish and Wildlife Service National Conservation Training Center in Shepherdstown, West Virginia. This session will provide an overview of the importance of records management.

Instructor

Michael Grimes has served as the Service Records Officer since 2000, providing guidance and support to agency staff concerning records management. He performs these duties under the direction of the Deputy Chief Information Officer for Portfolio Management and Strategic Planning in WASO.

Prior to coming to the National Park Service, Michael was an archivist at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, DC and College Park, Maryland. He has also worked at the Smithsonian Institution, at the Baltimore City Archives and in the Special Collections at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. Additionally, Michael has served as an instructor for the USDA Graduate School in Washington, DC.

Audience

This course is designed for all NPS employees who work with NPS records.

How to Interact with the Instructor

You are encouraged you to ask questions and share your comments with the instructor throughout this TELNPS course.

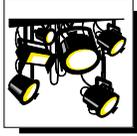
If you were physically in the classroom with the instructor, you would raise your hand to let her/him know you had a question or comment. Then you would wait for the instructor to recognize you and ask for your question. We are all familiar with that “protocol” for asking questions or making comments.

With TELNPS courses, there is also a “protocol” to follow to ensure you can easily ask questions and others can participate as well. It may seem a little strange at first asking a question of a TV monitor. Remember, it is the instructor you are interacting with and not the monitor. As you ask more questions and participate in more TELNPS courses, you will soon be focusing only on the content of your question and not the equipment you are using to ask it.

As part of the TEL station equipment at your location, there are several push to talk microphones. Depending on the number of students at your location, you may have one directly in front of you or you may be sharing one with other students at your table.

When you have a question, press and hold down the push to talk button, maintaining a distance of at least 12-18 inches and say, “Excuse me [instructor’s first name], this is [your first name] at [your location]. I have a question (or I have a comment).”

Then release the push to talk button. This is important. Until you release the button, you will not be able to hear the instructor. The instructor will acknowledge you and then ask for your question or comment. Stating your name and location not only helps the instructor, but also helps other students who are participating at different locations to get to know their classmates.



Course Overview

Background

Many employees of the National Park Service (NPS) are unfamiliar with records management, particularly electronic records management. This course gives an overview of the importance of electronic records management.

It also discusses their effective and efficient management, identifying and organizing electronic records, records disposition and the long-term care of records amongst other points.

Objectives

At the end of this course, you will be able to:

- State the importance of managing electronic records
- Be able to identify Federal records in the electronic environment
- List the steps you can take to maintain electronic records for efficient and effective use
- Define records disposition and be able to apply the concepts to electronic records
- Be able to determine which electronic mail messages are Federal records and understand how to manage them
- Understand the issues surrounding the management of electronic records for long-term access.

Capture your notes here





Identifying Federal Records

Federal records are defined in 44 U.S.C. 3301; the definition has three main points:

- Records are created *or* received
- The information is recorded to document or provide evidence of an agency's activities
- It includes **all** formats and media.

Some questions to ask if you are not sure:

- Does the item in question document the work of the NPS?
- Was the creator or recipient acting in an official capacity when it was created or received?
- Is the item related to an authorized activity of the NPS?

Other electronic documentation you might have includes:

- *Nonrecords*, which are documentary materials that are owned by the NPS but that do not meet the definition of a Federal record
- *Personal papers*, which belong and relate to YOU.

Capture your notes here





Maintaining Electronic Records for Efficient and Effective Use

There are some principles which govern the management of electronic records in a personal as well as a shared environment.

- Electronic records must be actively managed
- Electronic records must be organized in a useable filing system
- Electronic Records must be named in a logical and consistent manner that users can understand

Organizing Electronic Records

- Electronic records must be stored in a consistent, logical organization scheme
- Scheme should be simple
- Scheme should progress from general to specific

These ideas apply to your personal workspace and to records on a shared network drive.

Managing Your Personal Workspace

- Your personal workspace is for reference copies of documents and working materials
- Copies of documents and data that will be needed for later use should be transferred to and stored on your shared network drive
- Organization is based principally on individual needs but should **not** be idiosyncratic

Capture your notes here



Organizing Your Personal Workspace

- Create directories and folders that reflect the work you do
- Directories can be established for projects, programmatic areas, and so on
- Folders are created to organize documents within the directories
- Directories and folders should be flexible to allow for additions and deletions

Organizing Shared Drives

- Establish a directory structure that reflects the work of the organization
- Establish directories for major functions (general) and sub-directories for subsidiary functions and activities (more specific)
- Directory structure and names should be controlled at the office level
- Structure should be simple and flexible

Importance of Naming Conventions

Good naming conventions allow for documents and files to be identified in a *logical, consistent, and predictable fashion.*

This ensures that:

- Distinguishing between files becomes easier
- Storage and retrieval of files is facilitated
- Staff do not need to “reinvent the wheel” each time they name a document or file

Capture your notes here



General Guidelines for Naming Documents and Files

- Documents and files in an individual's personal workspace are usually named by the user, but the names should not be idiosyncratic
- Documents and files in shared drives need to adhere to standards developed, supported, and documented by the organization
- All documents need to be named such that they are accessible to all potential users, including future users

Developing Names

- Names need to be unique, brief, and descriptive
- Use only letters and numbers - no characters
- Use an underscore (_) to separate words
- Use dates to denote versions (rather than numbering them)
- Use a controlled vocabulary for terms
- Different types of documents and files need different structures for their names

Examples of File and Document Names

- TELClass_ElectronicRecords_6-2007.ppt
- ImageMetadata_DraftMay11-2006.kge.doc
- CACO_GroundWater_Rpt_2005_USGS.doc
- CATO4755.JPG
- GenShermanTree_seki_warner_20060120_05.tif
- Trails_PETE.mdb

Capture your notes here





Records Disposition-

This is the **final stage** in the life cycle of records.

- Done when records are no longer needed for current agency business
- Includes destruction or deletion of records and transfer to a storage facility such as a records center or an archives
- Needs to be done for electronic records too!

Records Schedules

- The NPS Records Management Schedule (formerly known as NPS-19, Appendix B [Rev. 5-03]) provides directions for what to do with NPS records
- General Records Schedule 20 (Electronic Records) covers NPS records too
- *Records may not be destroyed or transferred without an item in one of these schedules!*

The Value of Records

Two Types of Records:

- Temporary Records: destroyed after a specified period of time
- Permanent Records: maintained forever--needed to manage resources, document work

Capture your notes here





Managing Electronic Mail

General considerations for managing electronic mail:

- Use e-mail judiciously – consider the need for you and others to manage that message
- Use meaningful subjects to help guide the filing and disposition of the message
- Learn to identify messages that are Federal records (and those that are not) – like any other item

Disposition of Electronic Mail

- Determine if the message and its attachments meet the definition of a Federal record
- If the message and attachments are records, print and file them
- Delete the electronic version unless you need it for reference purposes
- Delete the message and its attachments as soon as they have served their purposes

Archiving Your E-Mail Messages

- Lotus Notes will allow you to set up archives for your e-mail messages
- You can set criteria for the automatic archiving of documents, for an entire database or for selected documents

Remember! Archiving saves messages and attachments to your machine!

Migration

- A necessary activity that will ensure that data remains accessible
- Migration involves moving data from one format and/or storage media to another format or storage media
- Usually done to ensure compatibility with software and media
- Media deterioration also will require periodic migration
- Like backups, migration can be done fully, incrementally or differentially

Media for Storing Data for the Long-Term

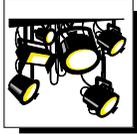
- Using removable media (rather than a hard drive or a network) will help safeguard data
- Magnetic tapes that meet the standards set forth in 36 CFR 1228.270(1), either reel to reel tapes or cartridges, are acceptable
- Compact Discs (CDs) and DVDs are inexpensive options for desktop use
- CDs and DVDs, if handled appropriately, might last up to 5 years. Magnetic tape could give up to 10 years of reliable service
- Using removable media (rather than a hard drive or a network) will help safeguard data

File Formats for Long-Term Access and Use

- *Migration will, in part, address this issue*
- The formats accepted by the National Archives for permanent records work well for the long-term storage of data
- Other formats that may work for long-term preservation include Rich Text Format (RTF), Portable Document Format (PDF) and PDF/A and eXtensible Markup Language (XML)

Capture your notes here





Final Thoughts on Managing Electronic Records

- The importance of what the NPS does demands that we take excellent care of our electronic records
- The business of caring for these records needs to be part of our other business processes
- Everyone is responsible for doing records management
- If you are unsure of what to do, ask for help!



Points to Remember

Be sure you know:

- The importance of managing electronic records
- How to identify Federal records
- The steps to managing electronic records for continued access
- What records disposition is and how to apply it to electronic records
- How to manage electronic mail
- The appropriate steps for the storage and care of electronic records for long-term access and use

Capture your notes here





Course Credit

**

Take the on-line evaluation at

www.nps.gov/training/tel

- Click on the DOI Learn tab
- Go to the link under Class Evaluations for *Handy Tips for Dealing with Electronic Records*
- Please complete the evaluation within 2 weeks of the course.

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Can You Identify a Federal Record?

Appendix B – Instructions for Archiving Your E-Mail

Appendix C – What Would You Do With This E-Mail Message?

Appendix A – Can You Identify a Federal Record?

Data collected during a project evaluating the impact of hikers on trails in Grand Canyon NP.

Powerpoint presentation on e-mail archiving; given by Jason Baron at the National Archives and Records Administration at a workgroup meeting concerning e-discovery issues.

Appendix B – Instructions for Archiving Your E-Mail

Setting Up Defaults for Documents to Be Archived

1. Choose **Actions - Archive - Settings** from the menu. The Archive Settings dialog box appears. **Do not** change any of the default settings under the **Basics** tab.
2. Click on the **Settings** tab and you should see the current archive criteria settings for your mail database.
3. To change your archive criteria settings, click the EDIT button and then click on the SELECT DOCUMENTS button.
4. Enter the appropriate number of days (eg. 120 days) under **All documents not modified** and click **OK** to save your settings.
5. The next time you archive, all documents not modified in the last 120 days will be archived automatically for you.

Note: DO NOT change any of the other Archive Criteria Settings in the dialog box.

Archiving Your Entire Mail Database

1. Choose **Actions - Archive - Archive Now** from the menu. The Archive confirmation dialog box appears.
2. Choose **Yes** to confirm the archive.
3. From the Folder Pane, click on **Tools - Archive - Default for Last Modified** to view your archive database.
4. The archived messages are automatically removed from your Mail database.

Archiving Selected Documents Only

1. Select the documents to be archived, and then choose **Actions - Archive - Selected Documents** from the menu. The Archive confirmation dialog box appears.
2. The **Move to Archive Destination** dialog box appears. Click **OK** to archive the selected documents to the defaulted location.
3. From the Folder Pane, click on **Tools - Archive - Default for Last Modified** to view your archive database.
4. The archived messages are automatically removed from your Mail database.

*Note: You can view your Archive Logs by choosing **Actions - Archive - Open Log**.*

Appendix C – What Would You Do With This Message?

