



GUIDELINE FOR DOCUMENTING SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

April 2020

PURPOSE: This guideline, created by the Division of Archives and Records Service (State Archives), is intended to help agencies with recordkeeping decisions around unusual and significant events.

The hope is that this guideline will make the job of records officers easier and will aid in creating comprehensive collections detailing how agencies across the state of Utah have dealt with COVID-19, earthquakes, forest fires, or any other important events in the state's history.

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What should you save to document your agency's response to a pandemic, earthquake, forest fire, or other significant event?

Collect records that answer questions like:

- How did your agency respond to the significant event?
- What was your agency's role in the community during the significant event?
- What was the community's response to the significant event and to your agency?
- What was it like to live and work during the significant event as part of your agency?
- How was your agency impacted by the significant event?

Records could take the form of traditional text documents, emails, newspaper clippings, graphics, social media posts, websites, etc.

- Typical documentation could include:
 - Telework and social distancing plans
 - Building inspection photographs and reports
 - Reports and memos on work and communications during this time
 - Webinars conducted by staff for off-site training
 - Employee newsletter
 - Press releases and press coverage of your unit's response
 - Correspondence showing significant new policies or work practices in place during the event
- Atypical documentation could include records about worklife for your agency – on site and virtual. For example:
 - A saved screenshot of your staff during a remote meeting
 - Closed or reduced service signs that you posted on your facility
 - Photos of sanitization efforts in your building
 - Agency-produced artwork or memes
- For guidance on preserving email, see State Archives' [Email Management Guideline](#).

- For guidance on preserving social media posts, see State Archives' [Social Media Use Guideline for Government Agencies](#).
- Website preservation—what you should know:
 - The State Archives uses [Archive-It](#) to “crawl,” host, and provide access to web-based content from websites of governmental entities across the state. This is called “harvesting.”
 - The State Archives harvested all Utah governmental entity websites between January–March of 2020. They try to do this annually for each agency. This includes the websites of state, county, municipal, special district, and education entities. The State Archives does not use Archive-It to harvest social media sites.
 - The State Archives is currently harvesting the coronavirus.utah.gov website weekly.
 - In May the State Archives plans to do a full harvest of state agency websites in order to capture earthquake and COVID-19 information.
 - Please [email a records and information management \(RIM\) specialist](#) at the State Archives if you create any new websites or webpages as a result of a significant event so that they can harvest them.

We suggest creating folders—labeled “earthquake,” “COVID-19,” “forest fire,” etc.—in your email, network drives, and filing cabinets to collect items. Once your administrative need for the records has expired, you can transfer them to the State Archives. This will result in the State Archives having a comprehensive collection detailing how agencies across the state of Utah dealt with COVID-19, earthquakes, forest fires, or any other significant events in the state’s history.

One final tip: only save and manage records that are prepared, owned, received, or retained by your government agency in order to accomplish its role. You don’t need to worry about everyone else’s records. For example, Governor Herbert’s daily report regarding COVID-19 is produced by the Governor’s Office and is their record to maintain. Unless you take that report and use the information in your agency as part of your functions, thereby creating a new record, you don’t need to preserve a copy for recordkeeping purposes.

What retention schedules should you use for significant event records?

There are a variety of retention schedules that could apply to your COVID-19, earthquake, forest fire, or other significant event records. Here are some of the most common ones:

[Agency history records \(GRS-1723\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

These records document the organization and reorganization of governmental entities. Information includes history, functional information, geographical boundaries, organizational files and related records.

Retain permanently.
Transfer records to the archives.

Effective 2015-06-01

[Local government ordinances and indexes \(GRS-49\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

These ordinances are rules, laws or statutes adopted by a local legislative body. Records include codified ordinances and indexes.

Retain permanently.
Transfer records to the archives.

Effective 2017-04-01

[Local government resolutions \(GRS-50\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

Local legislative bodies may exercise administrative powers by issuing resolutions. Records include formal opinions, decisions, and authorization issued by resolution.

Retain permanently.
Transfer records to the archives.

[Program and policy development records \(GRS-1717\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

These records are created by executive decision-makers to document the establishment and dissemination of agency programs, policies, and procedures. Executive decision-makers may include the Chair, Director, Chief Administrative Officer, Public Information Officer, Commissioner, Mayor, or other internal administrators as identified by the executive office. Includes development and decisions behind the policy or program, and the final product (e.g., approved policies). Related correspondence and email is included.

Permanent. Retain for 3 years after final action. Transfer records to the archives.

Effective 2020-02-26

[Public relations records \(GRS-1716\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

These records, regardless of format or mode of transmission, are created for distribution to the news media or public. Records include speeches, press releases, public announcements or similar records.

Retain permanently.
Records may be transferred to the archives.

[Disaster plan records \(GRS-2022\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

Disaster plans for records and office operations ensure that essential government functions continue to be performed following natural disasters, accidents, technical, or attack related emergencies. Information includes plans for restoring operations and protecting facilities and resources. Disaster recovery training materials may be included.

Retain until superseded, and then destroy records.

Effective 2014-06-01

[Scrapbooks \(GRS-2051\) - View](#) | [PDF](#)

These records are created by governmental entities compiling various items together to tell the story of their office. They include photographs, newspaper clippings, and other items pertaining to government activities, and actions and reactions of citizens.

Retain permanently.
Transfer records to the archives.

Effective 1991-06-01

Whom should you contact with questions?

Contact the Division of Archives and Records Service [\(RIM\) specialists](#) if you have questions.