

Regulations and Guidance

36 CFR1236	Management of Vital Records
36 CFR 1236.14	Management of Vital Records Definitions: Vital Records and Records Disaster Mitigation and Recovery (NARA Publication)
Executive Order 12656	Assignment of Emergency Preparedness Responsibilities

Other Sources of Information

The National Archives Vital Records and Records Disaster Mitigation and Recovery: An Instructional Guide: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/vital-records/>

The National Archives Vital Records and Disaster Recovery: <http://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/vital-records/recovery.html>

Your state archives are a good source of information and assistance. To locate your state archives visit: <http://www.statearchivists.org/statearchivists.htm>

About FEMA NCP

NCP's vision is to be the Nation's center of excellence for government continuity planning, guidance, and operations. Our mission is to serve the public by protecting our Nation's constitutional form of government. To accomplish this, the COOP Division provides guidance, technical assistance, planning, training and workshop support to other DHS and FEMA Components, Federal departments and agencies, States, territories, Tribes, and local government jurisdictions.

Website

Continuity news, tools, guidance, and other useful resources can be found on our website at: <http://www.fema.gov/continuity-operations>

Continuity Updates

To receive free continuity e-bulletins, register at: <http://www.fema.gov/subscribe-receive-free-email-updates>

Contact Information

Please contact HQ FEMA National Continuity Programs, Continuity of Operations Division for more information. For regional specific information, contact the appropriate Regional Continuity Coordinator from the list below.

FEMA Region	Location	Phone Number
FEMA HQ	National Capital Region	202.646.4145
Region I	CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT	617.832.4745
Region II	NJ, NY, PR, VI	212.680.8504
Region III	DC, DE, MD, PA, VA, WV	215.931.5223
Region IV	NC, SC, KY, TN, GA, AL, MS, FL	770.220.5614
Region V	MN, WI, IL, IN, MI, OH	312.408.5590
Region VI	LA, AK, OK, TX, NM	940.898.5131
Region VII	IA, KS, MO, NE	816.283.7082
Region VIII	CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY	303.235.4800
Region IX	AZ, CA, NV, HI, Guam, Pac. Is.	510.627.7009
Region X	AK, ID, OR, WA	425.482.4500

Regional offices can also be contacted via: www.fema.gov/regional-operations

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Continuity Essential Records Management

Continuity of Operations



FEMA

What is Essential Records Management?

Essential records are an essential element of a continuity program. Essential records management is the identification, protection, and ready availability of essential records, databases, and hardcopy documents needed to support essential functions under the full spectrum of all-hazards emergencies are critical elements of a successful continuity plan and program.

Major categories of Essential Records are:

- **Emergency Operating Records:** These include records and databases essential to the continued functioning or the reconstitution of an organization during and after a continuity activation.
- **Rights and Interests Records:** These include records critical to carrying out an organization's essential legal and financial functions and vital to the protection of the legal and financial rights of individuals who are directly affected by that organization's activities. These records include those with such value that their loss would significantly impair the execution of essential organization functions, to the detriment of the legal or financial rights and entitlements of the organization and the affected individual(s).

Examples of Essential Records may include:

- Emergency/Continuity of Operations Plan
- Staff contact and assignment information, such as names, addresses, and phone numbers
- Orders of succession and delegations of authority
- Policies, procedures and systems manuals
- List of credit cardholders to purchase needed supplies
- Maps and building plans
- Employee records, including financial and pay records
- Customer records
- Social Security and retirement records
- Titles, deeds, and contracts
- Licenses and long-term permits

What is an Essential Records Plan?

Your continuity of operations plan should include an essential records plan. Each organization's functional responsibilities and business needs are different. So, an organization should decide which records are essential and assign responsibility for their protection, storage, and upkeep to the appropriate staff. This is accomplished through the form of an essential records packet. The following actions can help in plan development:

- Conduct a Risk Assessment and a Business Impact Analysis to determine the most vulnerable records and how to protect them
- Identify records recovery experts and vendors to assist with recovery in the event of records damage
- Periodically review the packet to ensure that the information is current
- Develop procedures to routinely update essential records to ensure that they always contain the most current information.

What is an Essential Records Plan Packet?

An essential records plan packet is an electronic or hard copy compilation of key information, instructions, and supporting documentation needed to access essential records in an emergency situation. It should include:

- A hard or soft copy of Emergency Relocation Group (ERG) members with up-to-date telephone numbers;
- An essential records inventory with the precise locations of essential records;
- Necessary keys or access codes;
- Continuity facility locations;
- Access requirements and lists of sources of equipment necessary to access the records (this may include hardware and software, microfilm readers, Internet access, and/or dedicated telephone lines)

- Lists of records of recovery experts and vendors and a copy of the organization's continuity plans.

How Do I Protect my Essential Records?

To reduce your vulnerability, determine which records, files, and materials are most important in both your primary and alternate facilities. Consider their vulnerability to damage during different types of disasters (such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes), and take steps to protect them, including the following:

- Raising computers above the flood level and moving them away from large windows
- Securing equipment that could move or fall during an earthquake
- Consider off-site protection plans such as planned dispersal, E-vaulting, or duplication of records
- Regularly backing up essential electronic files and storing backup copies in a secure off-site location
- Moving heavy and fragile objects to low shelves
- Purchase fire-resistant cabinets and vaults.

Additional Suggestions

- Organizations should develop procedures to ensure that as soon as possible after activation of continuity plans staff at the continuity facilities have access to the appropriate media for accessing essential records.
- Organizations should consider maintaining these inventories at a number of different sites to support continuity operations.
- Organizations should develop instructions on moving essential records (those that have not been prepositioned) from the primary operating facility to the alternate site and include these instructions in its continuity plan.