In 1985, the State of Minnesota’s Department of Administration created general record retention schedules to manage government records created by public bodies. This records retention schedule was reviewed and approved by the state’s Records Disposition Panel and available to county boards to adopt.

If a county decides to create a unique record retention schedule, it is not considered valid until approved by the Records Disposition Panel. The Records Disposition Panel is responsible for approving all schedule adoptions as well as requests for destruction of records not listed on the general schedule. It is comprised of the State Auditor, Director of the Historical Society, and Attorney General.

Once a record retention schedule is approved, the county must keep the record type for the time listed on the schedule. The record may be disposed of once the period has elapsed.

The county board appoints a Responsible Authority for records management. Their primary responsibility is ensuring compliance with the Data Practices Act and approved record retention schedule.

### RECORD STORAGE

The Minnesota Data Practices Act defines Government Data as any data held, created, or disseminated by government entities. Data is collected all the time and includes everything from emails and agendas to contracts and marketing materials.

There are no statutory regulations for the storage medium for government data. A county may store them however it chooses, but there are a few important considerations when choosing how and where to store data and what medium to store it in:

- The record must be accessible for public use;
- The record must be stored in a quality that last for the entirety of its retention period; and
- If private, the record must be secure from unauthorized access and destruction.

### DISPOSITION

Counties should consider the implications of holding onto records that should have been destroyed. Retaining records that are confidential or nonpublic longer than is necessary puts county agencies at undue risk for liability if the records are mismanaged, or accidentally accessed by unauthorized individuals. It is important to schedule and manage regular record destruction as part of a record maintenance plan. There are no statutory guidelines for how to manage record dispositions. Instead, counties should list which records were destroyed carefully as proof that the records were effectively managed in the event of a lawsuit, audit, or security incident.
Some records have lasting historical importance to the state or a county. Some records are valuable indefinitely to the continued operation of county agencies. In this case, permanently retaining these records is required.

Keeping large catalogs of records indefinitely can be a cumbersome burden to counties. Fortunately, many records can be transferred to the State Archives. Once records are transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS), it becomes the sole owner of the records. If a county wishes to access a record again, it must follow the Archive’s process to view or copy the record. MNHS may also choose to dispose of the records after it gains ownership. Counties should consider these scenarios when transferring records. If the records need to be accessed quickly or a county prefers to remain responsible for their destruction or preservation of the record, they may wish to consider retaining them in-house instead of transferring them to the Archives.

August 2023

Minn. Rules 1205.1000
Minn. Stat § 138.17 Subd. 1