



USMC Essential Records Management

**PROACTIVE PLANNING, PREPARED
RESPONSE**

VERSION 1.1 / 2020 SEPTEMBER 09



Essential Records

What Are Essential Records (formerly Vital Records)?

- Records **required** by an organization to meet **operational** responsibilities, in the event of an emergency, natural disaster, or reconstitution of the organization
- Records that protect the **legal** and **financial** rights of the government and its citizens

The critical value of a record, both *during* and *after* an emergency, is what makes it essential!



Essential Records

What Types of Essential Records Does An Organization Create?

➤ Emergency Operating Records:

- Emergency plans and directives
- Delegations of authority
- Duty and staffing assignments
- Selected program records
- Policy or procedural records
- Orders of succession

➤ Legal & Financial Records:

- Payroll, Financial, Budget Records, accounts receivable
- Personnel, Leave, Health, and Insurance records
- Contracts and Agreements, entitlements and leases



Essential Records

How Does An Organization Identify Essential Records?

- **Step 1: Determine mission critical functions.** *What are the essential records specific to that function(s)?*
- **Step 2: Identify the SSICs and DON record schedules specific to those essential records.** *Annotate in the organizational file plan, preferably in the Command Records Operational Support Site (CROSS).*
- **Step 3: Determine organizational impact if records are lost or damaged.** *Consider intangibles (i.e., time, money, operational, human factors etc.)*
- **Step 4: Identify critical electronic information systems (EIS).** *Do all parties have the necessary accesses/permissions/passwords?*
- **Step 5: Ensure the records identified in Step 2 are inventoried annually.** *Are they still relevant? Have there been any updates or changes to these records' location, format, etc?*
- **Step 6: Include an essential records program in the organization's records management Standard Operating Procedure (SOP).** *How are essential records stored, updated, retrieved, and disposed of?*
- **Step 7: Ensure retrieval methods are incorporated into the organizational Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) or Emergency Action Plan (EAP).** *Who owns the organizational COOP/EAP? Have they been made aware of any changes?*



Essential Records

Inventory Collection

- There are several factors to consider when compiling an essential records inventory:
 - Are these records housed in **paper** or **electronic** format? *Are they temporary or permanent records?*
 - **Location** of records (i.e., on site vs. offsite, media, software, file cabinet, desktop, laptops, Share Drives, SharePoint, external hard drive etc.)
 - **Electronic RM (ERM) considerations** – what EIS are used to store records? *Are they publicly accessible? CAC enabled? Password protected?*
 - What are potential barriers to ERM?



Electronic systems allow records to be easily stored, retrieved, and protected!



Essential Records

What Are the Requirements to Retrieve Essential Records?

- Clearly annotate **where** essential records are stored and in what **format** (paper vs. electronic)
- Ensure essential records inventory **inclusion** within the organization's COOP (confirm access to EIS is previously deconflicted with G-6/S-6, HQMC ISC etc.)
- Consider **manual retrieval** options (*Who is responsible? How? Where? What procedures? Who can access? Time limits? Security protocols etc.*)
- Regularly **socialize** the organization's **Disaster Recovery Plan** – Consider “dry runs” to prepare in advance.





Essential Records

How Can An Organization Ensure Proper Essential Records Disposal?

- Ensure all essential records are assigned their appropriate record schedule (*i.e., cut-off/disposition date*)
- Conduct an annual review and inventory (*Note: for commands still utilizing paper records, ensure obsolete/records that have met their disposition are correctly disposed of or transferred to the National Archives and Records Administration*)
- Incorporate ERM systems to automatically manage disposition workflows (*i.e., MCTILM, DON TRACKER*)

All USMC organizations are required to migrate to ERM by 31 Dec 2022!



Essential Records

Summary

- Know **where** essential records are stored and the **format** they are stored in (paper *and* electronic)
- Have a robust **SOP** in place – identify processes to store, update, retrieve, and dispose of essential records
- Identify **personnel roles and responsibilities** – every Records Manager should know what records they are responsible for
- Ensure essential records are **inventoried** annually
- Ensure all essential records and their emergency retrieval procedures are included in the **COOP**
- Implement **ERM** to manage essential records according to their **disposition schedules**
- Rehearse an organizational **Disaster Recovery Plan** – what is the process of salvaging paper records in order to seamlessly resume normal operations



RM Support

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Command Records Operational Support Site

<https://eis.usmc.mil/sites/CROSS>