



Vital Records

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Background

- Vital records of an organization must be identified so they can be protected
- Protection of vital records is a joint effort of records management and disaster planning



Vital Records Program

- Identification of records consider “vital”
- Policies and procedures necessary to protect them
- Procedures to facilitate use of necessary records in an emergency



What makes a Record Vital?

- Information can't be duplicated at any cost or cost of replacing would be prohibitive
- Major business impact if not immediately available
- Necessary to resume or continue operations
- Required to recreate legal or financial status
- Protects obligations to employees
- Protects rights of other stakeholders

What is Vital?

If a catastrophic event occurred, what information would be

absolutely necessary

to resume business on a limited basis

- Immediately (next few days)
- Near term





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Vital Records are....

- Records that are fundamental to the functioning of an organization.
- Contain information critical to the continued operation or survival of an organization during or immediately following a crisis.
- Necessary to continue operations without delay under abnormal conditions.



ANSI/ARMA 5-2003 – Vital Records

- Records that contain information necessary to recreate an organization's legal and financial status and to preserve the rights and obligations of stakeholders, including employees, customers, investors, and citizens.



Texas agencies...

- Vital records series are designated but are not made mandatory.
- The RMO in each agency is responsible for determining which records series of the agency are vital.
- Records series unique to the agency may be vital.
- Some records series designated as vital on the State schedule may not be vital for an organization, depending on the nature of its internal recordkeeping systems.



Other Organizations

- Business impact analysis
- Site survey
- Records risk assessment and analysis
 - Likely risks/probability
 - What is acceptable loss
 - Cost and methods of protection
 - Prioritization

Why does it matter?



- If a record IS essential to the resumption of operations
- AND is not available from other sources
- THUS is unavailable when it is needed...
- One disaster could be devastating



Disaster Recovery Plan

- Backups of computer network data should make restoration of electronic data possible
- Need for hot spot



Vital Records Identification

- Meet operational responsibilities under disaster conditions
- Protect the legal and financial rights of the entity and those affected by its activities
- Essential to the continuation, resumption or reconstruction of business
- Important to preserving the rights of the company, agency, its staff and other stakeholders
- Necessary to establish legal and fiscal responsibility, status and position



Vital Records Information

- Business reason information is vital
- Paper or Electronic format
- Location
 - Access information
 - Quantity
 - Backup location
 - Backup plan



Evaluation of Records

- Which records could keep operations from resuming?
- What would be the consequences if these records were unavailable?
- Which records could not be replaced at ANY cost?
- How soon would these records be needed?



Examples of Vital Records

- Emergency Operating Records
 - Disaster Recovery Plan
 - Orders of succession
 - Phone lists
 - Lists of vital records
- Legal and Financial Rights Records
 - Accounting records
 - Insurance Records
 - Contracts



Records Risk

- Paper

- In 9-11, almost no paper survived
- Paper less likely to be backed up than electronic documents

- Electronic

- Network backed up
- Backup offsite
- Disaster recovery plan



Risk Assessment

- Risks – fire, water damage, flood, etc.
- Probable threats – tornado, hurricane, etc.
- Vulnerabilities – records stored in flood-prone area, old building, equipment downtime



Backup Methods for Paper Records

- Natural dispersal
 - a copy of the record is sent somewhere else as part of the normal business routine
- Improvised dispersal
 - duplicates of the record are made and sent to a protected environment on or off site on a regularly scheduled basis
- Planned dispersal
 - a distribution that is created specifically for protection purposes and not as a routine part of the business operation. This can include offsite storage, imaging a document or microfilming.



Backup Methods for Electronic Records

- Electronic Vaulting
 - Vital records are transferred to an alternate server or data warehouse
- Data Replication
 - Transactional replication (when changes are made)
 - Mirroring (synchronous)
 - Shadowing (asynchronous)



Vital Records Considerations

- Typically, only 3% to 7% of an organization's records would be classified as vital.
- Vital information is often confused with important information or historical/archival information.
- Vital records may be maintained on any kind of information media.
- Many vital records require "cycling" – the periodic removal of obsolete copies of vital records and their replacement with current copies of the vital records.



Vital Records List

- Inventory records and information
- Evaluate and classify
- Prioritize
 - Vital - essential for
 - emergency operations
 - business resumption
 - legal or audit protection
 - Important
 - Useful



Vital

- Highest protection priority
 - Needed to protect legal, financial, or operational functions
 - Could not be replaced by any means
 - Grave business consequences if not available
 - No amount of risk is acceptable



Important

- Secondary protection priority
 - Also essential for asset protection
 - May be available from other sources
 - May not be needed immediately following a disaster
 - Evaluation of risk
 - Would replacement cost exceed protection cost?
 - What efforts would be required?
 - How soon would information be needed?
 - How dire would consequences of not having it be?



Useful

- Lowest protection priority
 - Loss would cause inconvenience
 - Not essential to resumption of business



Vital Records Manual

- Vital Records List/Schedule
- Procedures to retrieve backups
- Disaster Recovery procedures
- Emergency contact list (key personnel and recovery contractors)
 - Physical and email address, all phone #'s
- Disaster Recovery firm contact
- Site and facility maps

Review annually!!



Storage of Vital Records Manual

- Copies maintained by holders of relevant positions
- Assignment/possession logged (w/dates)
- With collections of vital records (in a protected environment)

● ● ● | Be prepared!





Bibliography

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