

## **DESTRUCTION OF GOVERNMENT RECORDS**

### **1. OVERVIEW**

This policy establishes standards covering the physical destruction of government records.

#### **1.1 Authority**

- *Document Disposal Act* (RSBC 1996, c. 99)
- *Treasury Board Core Policy and Procedures Manual (CPPM)*, c. 12

#### **1.2 Applicability**

- Ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, Crown corporations and other public bodies (“other bodies”) covered by the *Document Disposal Act*

### **2. POLICY**

Government records eligible for final disposition of destruction under approved records retention and disposition schedules will be physically destroyed in accordance with standards established by the Corporate Records Management Branch (CRMB). These standards cover the following:

- ensuring the security and confidentiality of information is protected when records are destroyed;
- ensuring that records are destroyed using methods appropriate to their medium which achieve complete obliteration of information.

### **3. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

#### **3.1 Ministries and Other Bodies**

Ministries and other bodies are responsible for arranging the physical destruction of records eligible for scheduled final disposition of destruction which are located on-site and are not eligible for transfer to government-contracted records storage facilities.

Ministries and other bodies may use staff resources or contracted records destruction services to destroy eligible records. Ministries and other bodies are responsible for ensuring that staff and contractors comply with the standards established in this policy

when destroying records. Ministries and other bodies are responsible for ensuring services are contracted in accordance with Treasury Board standards governing contract management.

Ministries and other bodies are responsible for the costs of destroying on-site records.

### **3.2 Corporate Records Management Branch (CRMB)**

CRMB is responsible for establishing standards for the physical destruction of government records.

CRMB may establish government-wide master standing offers with contracted services in order to provide cost-effective records destruction services to ministries and other bodies.

CRMB will arrange for the destruction of eligible records stored in government-contracted records storage facilities. The costs of destroying eligible records stored in government-contracted storage facilities will be borne by CRMB.

## **4. STANDARDS**

### **4.1 Protecting Security and Confidentiality of Information**

Records that are in the process of being destroyed are subject to the same restrictions relating to release of information that apply to active and semi-active records. This means that records containing information that does not meet the criteria for routine release must be protected from access when they are being destroyed. This applies to the destruction of records in government-contracted storage facilities administered by CRMB and to the destruction of on-site records administered directly by ministries and other bodies.

While awaiting physical destruction, records that have been removed from active records shelving or from protected semi-active storage facilities will be stored in enclosed locked rooms, containers or vehicles or will be housed in a secure warehouse. No records will be stored on an industrial lot or at an open unsecured site.

Removal of records from government offices or from records storage facilities to a secure facility for destruction must be made safely, securely and promptly in enclosed and locked vehicles by bonded carriers.

## **4.2 Destroying Records Using Methods Appropriate to Their Medium**

### **4.2.1 Paper Records**

Paper records must be destroyed in a manner that ensures sensitive or confidential information is rendered unreadable. The method used for records destruction must also be cost-effective and environmentally friendly.

Shredding is the most common method of destroying paper records. The minimum standard for shredding government records is to use a cross-cut shredder. The material must first be shredded to a width of 1 centimetre (3/8") or less and any length and then shredded a second time at 15 millimetre (5/8") or less, or vice versa. Smaller shred sizes are acceptable for destruction; however, larger shred sizes are not acceptable.

After shredding, the resulting material may be recycled or pulped.

Paper records are eligible for regular office recycling only if they contain information that has been determined to be routinely releasable under the provisions of the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (RSBC 1996, c. 165). Confidential, sensitive or personal information may not be placed in open office recycling boxes, as the information cannot be protected when paper is sorted and graded. Use a locked confidential re-cycle bin or cross-cut shredder for these types of records.

### **4.2.2 Microforms and Computer Magnetic Media**

Microfilm, microfiche, magnetic computer tapes, compact disks and diskettes must be destroyed in a manner that ensures the information contained in the media cannot be reconstructed. Burning is considered the most effective method of destroying microforms, magnetic tapes and compact disks and diskettes. CRMB establishes and maintains master standing offers with companies to destroy microform records and magnetic media by burning records in environmentally safe facilities. Contact your Records Officer or CRMB for information on using authorized companies for this service.

### **4.2.3 Online Electronic Data**

Electronic data located online (on a database or network) should be deleted.

Electronic data includes: data located in applications files (such as word processing documents, spreadsheet workbooks, presentation slides, and so on); textual or imaged data maintained on databases; data in typographical, video, and/or audio formats contained on web-sites; and any other type of online electronic data.

## **5. RELATED POLICIES**

For authorities and approvals required for the destruction of records held by ministries and other bodies, see CRMB's Recorded Information Management Policy 2-04, *Disposition of Government Records*.

For responsibilities for applying approved records retention and disposition schedules to government records, see CRMB's Recorded Information Management Policy 2-03, *Authority to Apply Records Schedules*.