



## United States Department of the Interior

### BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

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July 13, 2000

Instruction Memorandum No. NM-2000- 048  
Expires 09/30/2001

To: All Employees, NM/OK/TX

From: Deputy State Director, Support Services

Subject: What You Need to Know to Manage Your Electronic Mail Records

The purpose of this IM is to provide you with guidance for managing your electronic mail records.

An electronic mail (e-mail) message can become a record when it is:

- created or transmitted by the sender or when received and acted on;
- in connection with the transaction of public business;
- evidence of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the Government or because of the informational value of data in them.

It is Departmental policy for all employees to properly manage the creation, retention, and disposition of records that are created or transmitted on e-mail systems according to IRM Bulletin No. 96-06 and regulations contained in 36 CFR 1220. Information created or received, within the custody of BLM, may be subject to public release under the Freedom of Information Act.

This policy applies to all messages, including attached files, that are not transmitted or received via the local area network (LAN) e-mail system, including messages that originate on the Internet, a commercial service, or any other e-mail system used by the BLM.

## User Responsibilities

All employees with access to LANs and the Internet are responsible for complying with this policy.

E-mail users are responsible for:

- Familiarizing themselves with the concepts and practice of distinguishing between record and nonrecord materials.
- Filing, retaining, and disposing of e-mail messages as they pertain to records and nonrecords.
- **Ensuring that a copy of each record generated, transmitted, or received is included in the printed and official filing system.**
- Ensuring complete transmission information is printed out with the e-mail message text. Transmission data includes: author transmittal date, all message recipient(s), subject, and return receipt, when used. This includes a copy of the mail group (public or private) that the message was sent to, if applicable.
- **Deleting e-mail messages from the e-mail system on a timely basis.**

An e-mail message consists of any document created, transmitted, or received on an e-mail system. This includes the message text and any attachments, such as word-processed documents, spreadsheets, and graphics, that may be transmitted with a message or with any “envelope” containing no message.

## Identifying E-Mail Records and Nonrecords

Electronic records contain numeric, graphic, textual, and other information that is recorded on any medium read by using a computer and that satisfies the definition of a Federal record in 44 U.S.C. 3301. The following guidelines are provided to assist you in differentiating between record and nonrecord e-mail messages.

E-mail documents are records when they (1) are created or received in the transaction of BLM business, (2) are appropriate for preservation as evidence of BLM’s functions and activities, or (3) are valuable because of the information they contain.

### Examples of e-mail messages/attachments defined as records:

- Unique, valuable information developed in preparing reports, studies, and positions papers that reflect action taken while conducting BLM business (even when later in the message, you may discuss plans for lunch).

- Unique, valuable information on programs, policies, decisions, directions, and essential actions (such as tasks completed or resolution of issues).
- Statement of policy or the rationale for decisions or actions.
- Documentation of conversations (in person or by telephone) during which policy is formulated, decisions and commitments reached, or other official activities are planned.

**E-mail documents are nonrecords when they meet any of the following conditions:**

- They provide no evidence of agency functions and activities.
- They lack information of value.
- They duplicate information already documented in existing records and, therefore, are not unique.

**Maintaining E-Mail Records**

**If you create an e-mail message or attach a file to an e-mail message and determine that either the message or the file is a record, you must print a hard copy of the record and file it in the official filing system - either a subject folder in Central Files, a custodial file, or a specific project file. This procedure also applies to any attachments that are considered records.**

E-mail folders (archival folders), which are part of the e-mail system, cannot be part of an official filing system because the e-mail system is protected by use of an individual password accessible only to the password holder. In addition, all e-mail messages on the LAN are purged by the system administrator after a predetermined length of time, such as 60 days.

After printing a hard copy, you may delete the electronic version of the message. A message that is a record becomes a nonrecord after the hard copy has been printed and properly retained.

Promptly delete nonrecord messages. If nonrecord copies are useful for reference or convenience, copy the information to the hard drive of your computer or to a diskette. Many e-mail messages are nonrecords, some examples are:

- copies of memorandums or text sent for information rather than action;
- instruction memos or information bulletins where the recipient is not the lead or coordinating office;
- messages that the recipient is not responsible for retaining;

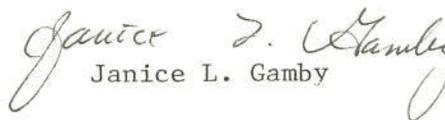
- messages that have only temporary value, such as a message that a meeting time has changed.

If you are unsure that an e-mail message is a record, treat it as a record and handle it accordingly. Contact your Records Administrator/Manager for assistance. Employees should use great care when handling privileged information, such as that containing Privacy Act or proprietary and confidential information by e-mail. Be sure your recipients know that the information is sensitive and handle it accordingly. Be careful what you write by e-mail. Visualize a judge reading it.

Attached is a brochure for quick reference for managing your email records. In addition, the National Training Center provides an Intranet-based training program entitled "Electronic Records Management for Electronic Mail (E-Mail)," Course 1270-94. The course is available at [web.tc.blm.gov/records](http://web.tc.blm.gov/records). The course helps explain why email is not just a messaging system, and how employees and managers can protect themselves, as well as ensure that their actions and decisions regarding electronic records are well documented.

For NMSO employees, a mandatory email training session will be held in the NMSO Conference Room Side A on Monday, July 17, 2000, at 9 a.m. and again at 1:30 p.m. A sign-up sheet will be posted in the Employees Break Room on the second floor. The same training session will be provided for the Field Offices in the near future.

If you have any questions about this guidance, contact your local Records Manager or the State Records Administrator Eileen G. Vigil via e-mail or at (505) 438-7636.

  
Janice L. Gamby

1 Attachment:

1 - Email Brochure (2 pp)

Distribution

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