

## General Retention Schedule #18 Local Fire and Ambulance Departments



Photo of Lansing Fire Station #4, Choate Collection, courtesy of the Archives of Michigan, Lansing.



Approved March 6, 2007

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**GENERAL SCHEDULE #18 – Local Fire/Ambulance Departments**

This Retention and Disposal Schedule covers records that are commonly found in Local Fire Departments and Ambulance Services. The records that are described on the attached pages are deemed necessary (1) for the continued effective operations of Michigan government, (2) to constitute an adequate and proper recording of it's activities, and (3) to protect the legal rights of the government of the State of Michigan and of the people. We, the undersigned, believe that this schedule meets the administrative, legal, fiscal and archival requirements of the State of Michigan.

*William I. Nelson*

*1/23/07*

Chief William Nelson, President  
Michigan Association of Fire Chiefs

(Date)

*Mark Harvey*

*2/9/07*

Mark Harvey, State Archivist  
Department of History, Arts and Libraries, State Archives of Michigan

(Date)

*Debra Gearhart*

*1/28/07*

Debra Gearhart, Director  
Department of History, Arts and Libraries, Records Management Services

(Date)

**APPROVED**

*3/6/07*

State Administrative Board

(Date)

## **General Retention Schedule #18 Fire/Ambulance Departments**

The Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) (Public Act 442 of 1976, as amended) defines public records as recorded information "prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created.

Michigan law (MCL 399.5 and 750.491) requires that all public records be listed on an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule that identifies how long the records must be kept to satisfy administrative, legal, fiscal and historical needs. Records cannot be destroyed unless they're listed on an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. Retention and Disposal Schedules are not authorized until the Records Management Services, the State Archives of Michigan and the State Administrative Board approve them. There are two types of schedules that local government agencies may use alone or in conjunction with each other:

A "**general schedule**" will cover records that are common to a particular type of government agency. General schedules may not address every single record that a particular agency may have in its possession. General schedules do not mandate that any of the records listed on the schedule be created. However, if they are created in the normal course of business, the schedule establishes a minimum retention period for them.

Any record that is not covered by a general schedule must be listed on an "**agency specific schedule**" that will address records that are unique to a particular government agency. Items listed on agency-specific schedules always supersede items listed on general schedules. Agency-specific schedules only address the specific records of the agency named on the schedule, and may not be used by another agency.

A scenario of where a government agency may want to use a combination of schedules would be to adopt General Schedule # 18 for Fire/Ambulance Departments while also adopting General Schedule # 1 – Non Record Material. Then if the government agency still has a specific record series that is not covered on these schedules they would submit an agency specific schedule for that particular record series. Once the agency specific schedule was authorized by the state, the local government agency could utilize all three schedules in conjunction with each other to meet their destruction needs. This would allow a local government agency to have a comprehensive retention and disposal schedule in place with minimal effort on their part.

Records can exist in a wide variety of formats, including paper, maps, photographs, digital images, e-mail messages, databases, etc. The retention periods listed on this general schedule may or may not specify the format that the record may exist in because each government agency that adopts this schedule may choose to retain its records using different formats.

Government agencies are responsible for ensuring that their records are properly retained and remain accessible during this entire retention period. Various laws identify acceptable formats for retaining public records; agencies are responsible for understanding and complying with these laws. Select records series that are listed on this schedule may be exempt from public disclosure, in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act. Please consult with your attorney or Records Management Services if you need additional information.

**State of Michigan**  
**Department of History, Arts and Libraries - Records Management**  
**Records Retention and Disposal Schedule**

DeptCode      DeptName  
 /GS18/      *Fire/Ambulance Departments*

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Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
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<b>18.001</b>	-	<b><u>Alarm Billings</u></b>	<b>CR+2</b>	<b>03/06/2007</b>
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These records document the billing for alarms and/or false alarms that the department responded to. They may or may not include billings, statements, incident numbers, address, and/or receipts.

<b>18.002</b>	-	<b><u>Annual Reports</u></b>	<b>PERM</b>	<b>03/06/2007</b>
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This is a copy of the annual report submitted each year to document what activities and events have taken place. It may or may not include statistical information regarding number of runs, type of incidents, financial statements, training attended or held and other various department activities.

<b>18.003</b>	-	<b><u>Apparatus/Vehicle Inspections</u></b>	<b>ACT</b>	<b>03/06/2007</b>
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These records document the monthly inspections and/or repairs of equipment as required by R408.17461, Part 74 of the General Industry Safety Standards. Information gathered documents the date, findings, who performed inspection, etc.. These records shall be maintained for the life of the apparatus. ACT = Life of Equipment

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18.004 - Budget Information      CR+6      03/06/2007

These records are used to develop annual budgets. They identify the amount that was requested and eventually approved. The documents may include proposals, salary information, projected overtime reports, vehicle and equipment needs/assessments.

18.005 - Building Inspection Reports/Files - Construction      ACT+10      03/06/2007

These records document inspections associated with construction/remodeling of residential, commercial or industrial properties. These would include all documents associated with the inspections or violations. They may or may not include blueprints, suspension of licenses, re-instatements of license, stop work orders, housing code compliance notices, and other related documents or correspondence. ACT = Life of Structure/Business

18.006 - Building Occupancy Inspection Reports/Files      ACT+10      03/06/2007

These records document inspections performed pursuant to M.C.L. 29.8 or P.A. 207 of 1941 for occupied buildings, places of assemblage and properties. These would include all documents associated with the inspections or violations. They may or may not include blueprints, suspension of licenses, re-instatements of license, stop work orders, housing code compliance notices, and other related documents or correspondence. ACT = Life of Structure/Business

Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.007 -	<u>Burning Permits (Recreational)</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document permits issued to residents to burn leaves, brush, etc.. and may include permits for fireworks and/or barbeque pits. They typically have an expiration date or specific time period to utilize the permit.</p>		
18.008 -	<u>Carbon Monoxide Inspection/Checklist</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document carbon monoxide inspections performed for citizens homes.</p>		
18.009 -	<u>Computer Aided Dispatch (C.A.D.) Log</u>	CR+2	03/06/2007
	<p>These computer log reports are printed from the C.A.D. system by the Central Dispatch Department. They document any/all calls that the department was sent or dispatched on. These may or may not include reports sorted by location (ALI) or incoming number (ANI). The report summarizes the type of call, who responded, incident number generated, date and time. They are used to support incident reports and various activities. These may need to be retained for a longer period of time if used as an index for retrieving incident reports. But, should not be retained any longer than the 10 years needed for that purpose.</p>		
18.010 -	<u>Committee Records</u>	CR+2	03/06/2007
	<p>These documents are from the various internal committees associated with the department, such as the Awards Committee. They may include membership lists, agendas, supporting documentation, minutes, reports, etc.</p>		

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**18.011 - Complaints - Citizens**      **CR+2**      **03/06/2007**

These records document any complaints filed by citizens against department personnel. They document what action, if any, was taken.

**18.012 - Contracts**      **EXP+6**      **03/06/2007**

These contracts document an agreement between the agency and anyone else. Note: These are not Mutual Aid Agreements. They may be contracts used for services such as medical examiners, doctors, medical personnel, police services, fire services, ambulance services, students, union labor, training and vendors. EXP = Date contract expires

**18.013 - Controlled Burn Release Agreements**      **CR+10**      **03/06/2007**

These records document agreements made between the department and the property owners allowing them to do a controlled burn. These are typically older structures and used primarily for training.

**18.014 - Correspondence - General**      **CR+2**      **03/06/2007**

This is general correspondence received from, and associated with, outside groups and/or organizations, and various staff members within the department. This correspondence is typically arranged chronologically or by correspondent name.

Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.015 -	<u>Daily Activity Logs (Journals)</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	These records document the daily activities of the department or it's staff		
18.016 -	<u>Daily Work Schedules</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	These records document the work schedule showing who is on duty when.		
18.017 -	<u>Discovery Orders</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	These are copies of discovery orders submitted by attorneys for information related to incidents.		
18.018 -	<u>Dispatch Activity Log</u>	CR+10	03/06/2007
	These records are logs of all radio and telephone transmissions received or transmitted from dispatch and are used to document communications that occurred during a call.		
18.019 -	<u>Dispatch Recordings</u>	CR+0/1	03/06/2007
	These records document the actual communications made through dispatch. The format may be electronic or audio. Typically these are rotated every 30 days and rerecorded over. Recordings of major events may be pulled from the rotation and used for litigation, training, etc..		

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18.020 - Driving Logs      CR+1      03/06/2007

These records document time spent driving department vehicles by department personnel and are used for driver certification.

18.021 - Educational Programs - Schools, Community, Etc.      ACT      03/06/2007

These records document activities where department personnel go into organizations and discuss fire safety and/or fire prevention. ACT = While Relevant

18.022 - Equipment Inspections - Portable      CR+3      03/06/2007

These records document equipment inspections and test performed on various equipment as required by the General Industry Safety Standard, Part 74, Fire Fighting. Examples include ladders, hoses, pumps, air tanks, generators, lights, rescue equipment, etc. The Insurance Services Offices and other various organizations often use these for rating fire departments.

18.023 - Equipment Inventory      SUP      03/06/2007

These records document what equipment is assigned to the department. These may or may not include equipment inventories by vehicle or unit. These are updated as equipment is added, replaced or disposed of.

Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.024 -	<u>Equipment Operator Log</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	<p>These logs document who operated what equipment and when. These may or may not be filled out daily or when the piece of equipment is actually used.</p>		
18.025 -	<u>False Alarm Reports</u>	CR+2	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document false alarms that the department was dispatched on.</p>		
18.026 -	<u>Field Training Observations (FTO)</u>	EVT+2	03/06/2007
	<p>These records are completed during a new employee's training period. They document their performance, and areas needing improvement during their probation period after being hired. They may include copies of daily reports, daily observations, weekly summaries, incidents reports etc. EVT = When the probation period ends.</p>		
18.027 -	<u>Fire Drill Reports</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document fire drills performed by various businesses, schools and public buildings as required by M.C.L. 29.19 of P.A. 207 of 1941 and are used to show the dates times and durations of these drills.</p>		

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18.028 -	<u>Firefighter (S.C.B.A.) Fit Test</u>	ACT	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document the qualitative and quantitative fit test for the Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (S.C.B.A.) performed for each firefighter as required by 29 CFR 1910.134(m) and by the Occupational Health Standard, Part 451, Respiratory Protection. ACT = While employed by the department.</p>		
18.029 -	<u>Fire Station House Inspections</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document inspections performed on the Fire Station and may or may not included inspections on equipment fixed to the station such as fire extinguishers, sprinklers, etc..</p>		
18.030 -	<u>Fire Station Licensure Files</u>	ACT	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document the inspections performed by the state and support the actual licensing of the fire department. ACT = While station is active</p>		
18.031 -	<u>Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	<p>This file will document any requests for information or public records. They may include requests for information, correspondence, a copy of the information released, and billing information.</p>		

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**18.032 - Grant Records**      **ACT+7**      **03/06/2007**

These records may contain the application, financial reports, progress reports and final reports for grants received. The grants may include, but are not limited to training grants, equipment grants, federal grants, matching grants, etc. ACT = Until grant is closed out by grantor.

**18.033 - Grievance Files**      **CR+7**      **03/06/2007**

These are copies of grievances filed against union contracts.

**18.034 - Historical Records**      **ACT**      **03/06/2007**

These records document the departments' history and are used primarily as reference material. They are typically "pulled" from the record series after it has met its' retention period and is transferred into this category. The department determines what is "Historical" to them. Examples may include but are not limited to photos, newspaper clippings, documents of historical importance, etc.. ACT = While of reference value to the department. Please contact the Archives of Michigan prior to disposing of these records.

**18.035 - Hydrant Repair/Inspections**      **CR+3**      **03/06/2007**

These records document the locations and/or inspections performed on fire hydrants.

Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.036 -	<u>Incident/Run Reports (Ambulance/EMS/Fire)</u>	CR+10	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document incidents that required personnel to be dispatched to an event. They may or may not include names of individuals involved, number of individuals involved, locations, time, date, responders, care provide, etc. and are required by M.C.L. 29.4 of P.A. 207 of 1941.</p>		
18.037 -	<u>Investigative Reports (Open) - Non-Criminal</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document any open investigations regarding fires that have been unsolved and classified as Non-Criminal.</p>		
18.038 -	<u>Investigative Reports (Open) - Misdemeanor</u>	CR+7	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document any open investigations regarding fires that have been unsolved and classified as a Misdemeanor.</p>		
18.039 -	<u>Investigative Reports (Open) - Felony</u>	CR+20	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document any open investigations regarding fires that have been unsolved and classified as a Felony.</p>		
18.040 -	<u>Investigative Reports (Open) - Homicide</u>	PERM	03/06/2007
	<p>These records document any open investigations regarding fires that have been unsolved involving a homicide.</p>		

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18.041 -	<u>Invoices - Original</u>	CR+6	03/06/2007
	These records document invoices that are generated by the department for contract services, overtime, licenses, etc..		
18.042 -	<u>Job Applications-Not Interviewed/Not Hired</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	These files, from individual applicants who were not interviewed, may include resumes, applications, and supporting documents.		
18.043 -	<u>Job Applications-Interviewed/Not Hired</u>	CR+2	03/06/2007
	These files, from individual applicants who were interviewed, but not hired, may include resumes, applications, and supporting documents.		
18.044 -	<u>Job Descriptions</u>	SUP	03/06/2007
	These records document job classification systems and positions. They may include research, surveys, or reviews done to create job descriptions, as well as job classifications and selection criteria. Job descriptions may include a summary of responsibilities, functions, applicant requirements, and salary and benefit classifications.		
18.045 -	<u>Key/Knox Box Records</u>	SUP	03/06/2007
	These records document the locations of keys or security systems within buildings and structures.		

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18.046 -      Litigation Files      ACT+10      03/06/2007

These files document any litigation that the department or personnel are involved in. They may include depositions, transcripts, decisions, correspondence, data, exhibits, research materials, reports, press releases, media clippings, etc. ACT = until case is closed.

18.047 -      Material Safety Data Sheets (M.S.D.S.)      ACT      03/06/2007

The records document information about the product manufacturer, composition, physical and chemical properties, identification of hazards, fire hazard, accidental release measures, handling and storage, first aid measures, toxicology, ecological information, disposal and transport considerations, as required by 29 CFR 1910.1200 and the General Industry Safety and Occupational Health Standard, Part 92, Hazard Communication. ACT = While material is in use or stored on property.

18.048 -      Medical/Exposure Records      ACT+30      03/06/2007

These records are required by M.C.L. 408.1061 of P.A. 154 of 1974 and document work related incidents of exposure to toxic substances, blood borne pathogens or harmful physical agents. R325.3457 and R325.3456 of the Occupational Health Standard, Part 470, Employee Medical Records and Trade Secrets, require that these records be retained for 30 years as does 29 CFR 1910.1020(d). ACT = Duration of employment

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**18.049 - Medical Consent Forms**      **CR+2**      **03/06/2007**

These forms are used to document what medical services were provided and/or refused by individuals. They typically include the persons name, dispatch #, address, etc. and are used to document the individuals choice to refuse/accept transport and/or medical services.

**18.050 - Meeting Minutes**      **CR+10**      **03/06/2007**

These records document the official activities of public bodies that are subject to the provisions of the Open Meetings Act (such as official governing boards, commissions, committees, advisory boards, tasks force, or other legislatively mandated decision making bodies). These records include original (sometimes signed) meeting minutes, agendas, audio/visual recordings, and other supporting documentation. M.C.L. 38.509 of P.A. 78 of 1935 requires these to be maintained for minimum of 10 years.

**18.051 - MIOSHA Logs**      **CR+5**      **03/06/2007**

These records document occupational injuries and illnesses. They may or may not include MIOSHA 300, 300-A or MIOSHA 301 forms. R408.22133 of the MIOSHA Safety & Health Standard, Part 11, Recording and Reporting of occupational Injuries and Illnesses, requires that these be retained for a period of 5 years following the end of the calendar year that these records cover.

**18.052 - Monthly Reports**      **CR+7**      **03/06/2007**

These records document activities that occurred. These may or may not include summaries, statistics, # of runs, injuries, etc.

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18.053 -      Mutual Aid Agreements      ACT+10      03/06/2007

These are agreements executed between the department and other agencies to provide mutual support as needed during a crisis or emergency. ACT = While the agreement is in place.

18.054 -      Outside Employment Form      ACT      03/06/2007

This is a form completed by employees who have a second job. It is authorized by the agency and used to identify any conflicts of interest. ACT = While employed by the 2nd party.

18.055 -      Overtime Equalization Records      CR+2      03/06/2007

These records document overtime used/submitted by employees. It is used to resolve any immediate issues with pay.

18.056 -      Pass Tag      SUP      03/06/2007

These records document the firefighter name, address, doctors, phone numbers, and other basic contact information. These are typically worn by the firefighter and used in case the firefighter goes down and needs to be identified.

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18.057 - Payroll Timesheets      CR+5      03/06/2007

These are typically copies of timesheets that are completed and forwarded to the payroll office.

18.058 - Personal Equipment Records      ACT      03/06/2007

These records document inspections performed on the employee's protective clothing/equipment and document the condition and/or any repairs completed. ACT = While in use

18.059 - Personnel Information Records      SUP      03/06/2007

These records are used as a reference tool for identifying employee badge number, FOIA number, phone number, address, seniority, hire date, termination date, birthdays, etc. and are used primarily as a reference type record.

18.060 - Personnel Files      ACT+7      03/06/2007

These files are maintained for each employee and contain records that document all human resource related transactions that occurred during the employee's period of active employment. They are used to record employee performance and maintain current contact information. They may include applications, awards, evaluations, training certificates, personal change forms, second job notifications, grievances, fingerprint cards, photo, ID cards, skills check list, professional qualifications, etc. ACT = While employed by the department.

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18.061 -      Photographs      ACT      03/06/2007

These are photographs of incidents, including crime scenes, accidents, evidence, fire investigations, etc. and are typically maintained in the incident file until the retention period has been met. This record series allows departments to withdraw photos after the retention period for the records series has been met. The photos may then be used for training or documenting historical incidents for future reference. ACT = While relevant to the department

18.062 -      Policy/Procedure Manuals      SUP      03/06/2007

These records document internal policies and orders issued by the Chief or department. They may also contain official bulletins that are used to convey information to the administrative staff, officers and volunteers.

18.063 -      Position Interview Questions      SUP      03/06/2007

These documents contain a list of questions associated with the job descriptions. They are updated as the job descriptions are updated. The questions are used in the interview process to assure the same questions are asked to all candidates. SUP = Until questions are superseded.

18.064 -      Pre-Fire Surveys      SUP      03/06/2007

These records document emergency plans for responding to locations within the call area. They may contain information regarding routes, locations of hydrants, etc. These may be included in the SARA III records if hazardous material exists.

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18.065 -	<u>Promotional Results</u>	ACT	03/06/2007
	These records contain information associated with test scores, test sheets order of ranking, results of offsite testing, etc. ACT = While test are active		
18.066 -	<u>Public/Community Activity Schedules</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	These records document social events held within the community that the department may be involved with such as dances, festivals, etc.		
18.067 -	<u>Purchasing Records</u>	CR+6	03/06/2007
	These records are documents that support purchases made by the department.		
18.068 -	<u>Records Management Database System - NFIRS/MFIRS</u>	CR+25	03/06/2007
	These systems are often used to track information associated with incidents and document the information required to be submitted to the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFRIS). These databases are typically designed with various modules that track the details associated with each call that the department is dispatched on. The retention period reflects the need to migrate the data from one system to the next.		

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18.069 -      Reference Files      ACT      03/06/2007

These records/books are documents used as reference material. They may include but are not limited to manuals, catalogs, brochures, etc. ACT = while relevant.

18.070 -      Ride Along Waiver      CR+1      03/06/2007

This is a waiver of liability signed by a citizen who rides with the department. It is used to document the date and the name of the person who participated.

18.071 -      SARA III/Fire Fighter Right-to-Know Records      ACT      03/06/2007

These records document hazardous materials used in businesses as required by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) of 1986, the Bureau of Fire Services and M.C.L. 408.1014(i) of P.A. 154 of 1974. These may or may not include MSDS sheets, action plans, inventories, building layouts or diagrams, etc. ACT = While in use.

18.072 -      Siren Test      CR+3      03/06/2007

These document the test performed on the public warning sirens that are used to alert the community of danger.

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Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.073 -	<u>Subpoenas</u>	CR+1	03/06/2007
	These are copies of subpoenas received to appear in court or requesting for information.		
18.074 -	<u>Tickets/Citations</u>	CR+2	03/06/2007
	These are copies of the tickets issued for fire lane violations, minor fire code violations, etc..		
18.075 -	<u>Time/Attendance Records</u>	CR+5	03/06/2007
	These document the time attendance of firefighters and may or may not include roll call logs, time sheets, etc..		
18.076 -	<u>Tornado Watch/Warning Records</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	These records document the dates and times that tornado watch/warning are issued by the National Weather Service and show who responded and/or participated in the watch/warning.		
18.077 -	<u>Training Bulletins/Schedules</u>	CR+3	03/06/2007
	These are internal bulletins required by the General Industry Safety Standard, Part 74, Fire Fighting, that are used to notify a department or staff that they are scheduled for upcoming training.		

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**18.078 -      Training Courses - Administrative      CR+3      03/06/2007**

These records document the courses regarding blood borne pathogens offered through the department as required by the Occupational Health Standard, Part 554, Bloodborne Infectious Diseases and 29 CFR 1910.1030(h)(2)(j). The CFR requires that the dates, content, names and qualifications of instructors, names and titles of those attending be collected.

**18.079 -      Training Files - Firefighter      ACT+7      03/06/2007**

These records are used to document what training staff has received. They may contain medical/biological hazard training, training schedules certificates, course descriptions and receipts. ACT = While employed by the department.

**18.080 -      Training Fund      CR+6      03/06/2007**

These records document money available and spent from the training fund.

**18.081 -      Vehicle Accident Report      ACT      03/06/2007**

These records document accidents any department vehicles are involved in. These may or may not include accident reports, parties involved, damage reports, repairs, etc. ACT = While vehicle is active.

ACT = Active      CR = Creation      EXP = Expiration      FY = Fiscal Year  
 SUP = Superseded      EVT = Event      DISP = Immediate Disposal

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Item Number	Series Title	Total Retention	State Administrative Board Approval Date
18.082 -	<u>Video Tapes</u>	CR+0/1	03/06/2007

These video tapes are used in vehicles or during incidents. The tapes are typically cleared and reused on a regular basis. Recordings of major events may be pulled from the rotation and used for litigation, training, etc. Tapes that involve incidents that may go to court are not erased until the action or investigation is resolved.



**Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries  
Records Management Services**

**Frequently Asked Questions  
About General Schedules**

**Q: What is a public record?**

**A:** The Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([MCL 15.231-15.246](#)) defines public records as recorded information “prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created.”

**Q: Are all records considered to be “official” records?**

**A:** No. General Schedule #1 addresses the retention of “nonrecord” materials. These documents are broadly defined as drafts, duplicates, convenience copies, publications and other materials that do not document agency activities. These materials can be disposed of when they have served their intended purpose. Government agencies need to identify the “office of record” when multiple offices possess copies of the same record. The “office of record” is responsible for following the retention period that is specified, duplicates do not need to be retained. A more comprehensive definition can be found in the approved schedule (available online at [http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal\\_mhc\\_rms\\_GS1\\_local\\_110758\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_mhc_rms_GS1_local_110758_7.pdf)).

**Q: Are the retention periods that are listed on general schedules minimum amounts of time that a record should be kept?**

**A:** Yes. General schedules authorize, but do not require, public officials to dispose of records after the expiration of the assigned retention period. Local situations may require retention beyond the periods listed, and nothing prevents a government agency from retaining records longer than the specified period of time. If records are kept for less than the amount of time listed, the agency can be penalized for unlawful destruction of records. In addition, if records are kept too long, they can waste valuable storage space, and they can become a liability to the agency if it receives a FOIA request, or if it becomes involved in litigation.

**Q: Does my government agency have to follow a general schedule?**

**A:** Records cannot be lawfully destroyed without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. The purpose of a general schedule is to ensure that all government agencies are following consistent retention practices, and to prevent individual agencies from having to develop an agency-specific schedule. However, if your government agency does not want to follow an approved general schedule, it would need to get an agency-specific schedule approved. [Note: agency-specific schedules always supersede a general schedule.] Internal policies do not have the force of law that an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule has.

**Q: What is an agency-specific schedule?**

**A:** Agency-specific schedules are Retention and Disposal Schedules that only apply to the agency listed on the document. They are intended to cover records that are unique to that specific agency. Records that are listed on an approved general schedule should not be listed on an agency-specific schedule, unless the agency has a unique situation that justifies a different retention period than the one everyone else is following. The instructions and forms for agency-specific schedules are available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

**Q: What should my government agency do if we create a record that is not listed on the general schedule?**

**A:** The general schedule covers records that are common to most government agencies. However, general schedules do not claim to be inclusive of every record that all agencies create. Records that are not listed on general schedules cannot be destroyed without the authorization of an approved agency-specific schedule.

**Q: What should my government agency do if we do not create a record that is listed on the general schedule?**

**A:** Nothing. General schedules do not mandate that any of the records listed on the schedule be created. However, if they are created in the normal course of business, the schedule establishes a retention period for them.

**Q: What do the codes in the Total Retention column mean?**

**A:** The **retention codes** that appear on the schedule are used to establish how long records are retained by the creating agency before they are destroyed. Retention

codes determine how destruction dates will be automatically calculated by Versatile (Versatile is the records management software that is used by Records Management Services to manage the retention of records), and the date upon which the calculation will be based. Definitions of these codes can be found in the Records Management Manual that is available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

**Q: What do the numbers in the Total Retention column represent?**

**A:** In addition to the retention code, a period of time, years and/or months, can be used in the calculation of the retention period. Years are expressed as whole numbers, and months are expressed as fractions. For example, the fraction "0/6" would represent 6 months. The retention code plus the period of time results in a mathematical formula that is used to determine a disposal date.

**Q: Do the general schedules only cover paper records, or do they cover databases and other electronic records too?**

**A:** Records can exist in a wide variety of formats, including paper, maps, photographs, digital images, e-mail messages, databases, etc. The retention periods listed on the general schedules do not specify the format that the record may exist in, because each government agency that adopts the schedule may choose to retain its records using different recording media. Government agencies are responsible for ensuring that their records, regardless of format, are properly retained and remain accessible during this entire retention period. Various laws (including the Records Reproduction Act) identify acceptable formats for retaining public records; agencies are responsible for understanding and complying with these laws.

**Q: Do the general schedules cover e-mail?**

**A:** Yes. Many of the record series that are listed on the general schedules may originate as e-mail. Those e-mail messages need to be retained for the period of time specified by the schedule. For more information about e-mail retention, please check out the online guide at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

**Q: Can records be microfilmed or digitally imaged?**

**A:** Yes. The Records Reproduction Act (MCL 24.401-24.406) regulates the reproduction of public records by Michigan government agencies at all levels. This law requires the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries to promulgate technical

standards to ensure the continued accessibility and usability of records that are microfilmed or digitized throughout their retention period. The standards are also intended to help state and local governments ensure the integrity and authenticity of their records. The Records Management Services administers competitively bid master contracts for microfilming and imaging services. State agencies and local governments are eligible to use these contracts to receive these services. More information is available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

**Q: How can I determine which records that are listed on the general schedules contain confidential information that should not be released to the public?**

**A:** Select records series that are listed on the general schedules may be exempt from public disclosure, in accordance with the provisions of state and federal laws. Please consult with your attorney if you need additional information.

**Q: Is there an appropriate way to destroy records that contain confidential information?**

**A:** Yes. Some public records contain sensitive or confidential information. These records should not be placed in a regular trash or recycle bin when they are destroyed. It is important that government agencies ensure that these records are destroyed in a manner that prevents the inappropriate release of the information. The State of Michigan administers a master contract with a vendor that complies with the state's requirements for confidential destruction of records. Government agencies that are interested in using this contract should contact the vendor: Certified Document Destruction, attention: Brian Dorosz, (800) 433-7876. Confidential electronic records should be destroyed in accordance with the U.S. Department of Defense "Standard Industrial Security Program Operating Manual" (DoD 5220.22-M).

**Q: Who is responsible for ensuring that Retention and Disposal Schedules are followed?**

**A:** The Michigan Penal Code (MCL 750.491) establishes misdemeanor penalties for disposing of records without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. Government agency directors are responsible for ensuring that relevant staff are aware of the provisions in the schedule and follow them. The Records Management Services does not audit agencies and assess penalties. However, courts may penalize agencies for failing to follow an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule.

**Q: What should I do if I have suggestions for revising a general schedule?**

**A: Contact the Records Management Services at (517) 335-9132.**

