

United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

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To: IRM Coordinators
Local Area Network Administrators Work Group Members
Bureau/Office Records Managers
Bureau/Office FOIA Officers

From: William S. Pfancuff, Acting Director *//signed by John R. Webber, Jr.//*
Office of Information Resources Management

Subject: **Departmentwide Standards for the Retention of Electronic Mail (e-mail) "System" Messages and E-mail System Backup Tapes**

Research conducted by the Department's Records Officer, with assistance from the DOI Local Area Network Administrators Group, in the fall of 1996, showed that there is a need for additional guidance to the bureaus to ensure compliance with the Federal Records Act, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and other related regulations with respect to the handling of e-mail. The study showed that, across the Department, there is a wide disparity of practices relating to the "system" retention of e-mail messages in general, and retention of e-mail- related system backup tapes.

So that employees can adequately preserve and protect their e-mail records, it is imperative that Departmentwide standards for managing e-mail are implemented in order to ensure that: (1) a consistent level of service is provided for all e-mail systems, (2) employees are given adequate time to properly preserve their records, and (3) the process for responding to FOIA requests is facilitated. These standards must address automatic deletion criteria for all messages on centrally managed e-mail systems supporting a shared message store, and the retention of backup tapes for these systems.

A consistent level of service will provide Interior employees a known amount of time to correctly preserve their e-mail records. Currently, this requires employees to print their e-mail records to paper and file appropriately. The consistent level of service for the "system" retention of e-mail messages will also provide FOIA Officers with a known time period for access and retrieval of e-mail messages.

The attached Departmentwide standards and practices should be implemented immediately. Please ensure this guidance is implemented throughout your bureau/office as soon as possible.

If you have any policy questions, please contact Sharon Michel on (202) 208-3321. For technical questions, please contact Martin Quinlan on (303) 236-7130 x228.

[Attachment:](#) E-mail Retention and Backup Tapes Standards

Federal Authorities:

- Federal Records Act, 44 U.S.C. Chapters 21, 29, 31, and 33
- 36 CFR chapter XII; Sub Part B, Parts 1220, 1222, 1226, 1228, and 1234, Federal Records Management Regulations
- 5 U.S.C. 552, Freedom of Information Act, as amended

Departmental Authority:

- IRM Bulletin No. 96-06, Policy and Guidance for Managing the Creation, Retention, and Disposition of Electronic Mail Documents