

Best Practices for Using the State Records Center

A Toolkit for Using the State Records Center Efficiently and Economically



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This guide was produced by
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Overview of the Records Center

Records management is a comprehensive task that encompasses all records, regardless of format or media. The State Archives & Public Records Administration (PRA) oversees records management functions for all state and municipal agencies. This includes providing records management advice, assistance, and consultation.

This guide is intended to serve as a resource providing recommendations on how to best utilize the services offered by the State Records Center.

Things to Know

What is the Records Center?

The State Records Center (SRC) is where agencies can send inactive public records to be housed and stored.

The PRA partners with a vendor for these storage services and acts as an intermediary between agencies and the vendor by facilitating services such as record storage, retrieval, and destruction.

What functions are performed by the State Records Center (SRC)?

- Storage of inactive records (records from agencies sent for new storage).
- Retrieval and delivery of records to agencies.
- Arranging pickup of retrieved records from agencies to be returned to the SRC.
- Sale and shipping of supplies, such as barcodes and records boxes.
- Providing agencies with inventories of records stored with the SRC.
- Destruction of records when their retention period ends.

What is retrieval?

Retrieval is the process of the SRC temporarily returning files or boxes to the agency that sent them into storage.

What is a refile?

Refiling is the process of sending retrieved files and/or boxes back to the SRC for storage.

What is an interfile?

Interfiling is the process of sending new files to the SRC to be added to a box that has already been sent there.

What is a transmittal?

A transmittal is the form agencies complete and submit to the PRA to facilitate sending new records into storage at the SRC.

What is the annual inventory?

The annual inventory lists the boxes each agency has in storage in the SRC. It serves as a reference for the agency when they need to retrieve records, provides the opportunity for agencies to review what may be eligible for destruction based on approved records retention schedules, and also allows agency staff to check for any errors in description.

What is permanent withdrawal?

Permanent withdrawal is the process of marking a file and/or box as permanently removed from storage at the SRC. If the file and/or box is not already with the agency, it will first be retrieved and then marked as permanently withdrawn.

Who do I contact if I need any of these services?

Contact the PRA at records@sos.ri.gov for any of these services. The PRA will then facilitate retrieval or request on your behalf.

Starting with Records Management

Retrieving Records from the State Records Center

Submit requests for retrieval to the PRA at records@sos.ri.gov.

- For an entire box, you only need to provide the barcode.
- For individual files, you must provide the barcode of the box and specific information about the file.



Barcodes for the box(es) must **always** be provided when placing an order to ensure accuracy and safety of the inventory.

- Requests submitted before 11:00 AM arrive the next business day.
- Requests submitted after 11:00 AM will arrive in two (2) business days.

Current barcodes

- Letters “RF” followed by nine (9) numerical digits.



Other acceptable (legacy) barcodes

- Nine (9) digits (all numerical); or



- Letters “RI” followed by six (6) numerical digits; or



- Letter “R” followed by seven (7) numerical digits.



Unacceptable barcodes

- One (1) to five (5) digits (all numerical). These are barcodes used by a previous vendor and are no longer recognized by the current vendor.



← Example of unacceptable three (3) digit barcode

- A non-standard number assigned by your agency rather than the SRC (in any format). Every box in the SRC must follow a recognizable format, as above.



The PRA provides an updated inventory to each agency every May. The correct, current barcode will be in this inventory. If you cannot access your agency's current inventory, email the PRA team and an updated inventory can be provided within a day. The PRA team may also be able to identify the necessary barcode immediately.

Maximizing Efficiency, Minimizing Cost

Tip #1: Submit requests in bulk once per day.

- For example, four (4) requests submitted at 9:30 a.m. will result in one (1) complete delivery.
- Each delivery costs \$21.50 and requests not submitted together may be delivered separately, resulting in multiple delivery fees.



Rush orders are available for a higher surcharge of \$53.47.

- Exception – Larger requests of ten (10) or more files or boxes should be sent to the PRA as soon as possible.

Tip #2: Schedule time each week for Retrievals.

- This tip is ideal for agencies that may not need files as quickly or consistently. Agencies may want to submit requests:
 - Once a week, on a preselected day;
 - Every other day; or
 - Twice a week.



These tips may not be ideal for all agencies. They are examples of the most effective ways of utilizing off-site storage of inactive records.

Returning (Refiling) Records Retrieved from the State Records Center

Contact the PRA via email

- In the subject line of the email include: Refiles.
- Provide: the number of loose files (barcodes and file descriptions not needed) and the number of intact boxes.

Ordering Supplies

Contact the PRA via email to place an order of supplies.

Standard Records Storage Boxes (1.2CF)

- Two (2) Options available –
 - Single-walled (\$1.55 per box) - Model 2000 or
 - Double-walled (\$1.92 per box) – Model 2000A
- Sold in bundles of ten (10), including lids. Individual boxes are not available for purchase.

Other less common supplies are available, including barcodes, interfile labels, and planner cartons (for storage of rolled up items).

MODEL 2000

RFID-Ready Letter/Legal

- RFID-Ready
- Internal Dimensions 15 x 12 x 10 inches



MODEL 2000A

Auto Fold Letter/Legal

- Internal Dimensions 15 x 12 x 10 inches
- Security Hole



RFID T LABEL*

Purchase Label to Affix to Other Box Type

- Comes with Buddy Tag for use with Transmittals
- Label tags box with RFID chip
- Sold in Quantities of 10
- Passive RFID Chip (no battery, no constant signals)



Storing Inactive Records

Inventories of Records at the State Records Center

The PRA sends an inventory to each agency every May.

- The Annual Inventory includes:
 - A list of the agency's boxes stored with the SRC;
 - The barcode for each box;
 - A major description for each box; and
 - The eligible destroy dates.
- The inventory is sent following end-of-year destruction, which occurs between January and April.
- The inventory is sent to most frequent agency contact. Distribution within the agency is at this contact's discretion.
- The Public Records Administration recommends storing and saving the inventory in a readily available location.



Agencies should also maintain an inventory of the records retained on-site and should include data such as box-level descriptions and date ranges of records. Series numbers and destruction eligibility dates should be noted for records covered by retention schedules.

Sending New Containers into Storage

The PRA has detailed instructions and forms necessary for sending records into storage available via email or on our [website](#), and in the [State Agency Manual](#) when your agency is ready.

All records being sent to the State Records Center must be identified on a **Cover Sheet (MS Word)** and **Transmittal Form (MS Excel)** prior to pick up for off-site storage. The Transmittal Form has key fields that assist the PRA and your agency in identification and proper maintenance of off-site records.

Each box of records is assigned a unique RFID barcode for inventory control, tracking and reference. The following fields are **required** for all transmittals:

1. **Customer ID:** The State of Rhode Island's Customer ID is "B8069".
2. **SKP Box Number:** The box number on the blue Iron Mountain barcode label (i.e., "RF025468759").
3. **Division ID:** The State of Rhode Island's Division ID is "EXECUTIVE".
4. **Department ID:** Your agency's unique ID (i.e., "RI00035").
5. **Record Code:** The record series number that corresponds with the record series title from the associated records retention schedule. If no existing record series or records retention schedule applies, contact the PRA by emailing records@sos.ri.gov.
6. **From/To Dates:** Date span of the records in the box (using the format "MM/DD/YYYY").
7. **Major Description:** The primary description of the box contents using approved truncations of the record series title from the associated records retention schedule, and if applicable, the division of agency and town of office.
8. **Destruction Date or Destruction Indicator:** The scheduled destruction eligibility date based on the retention period from the associated records retention schedule. If no exact date is applicable, add a destruction indicator of "Permanent" or "Undefined".
9. **Alpha From/To:** The alphanumerical sequence range of files in the box (i.e., Jones-Smith; 20450-20567; AD123-BZ784, etc.).

Requirements on forms:

- Each column title in the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet is color coded to indicate which fields are required:

Required
Required When Applicable
Optional

- The following characters are not accepted in any field:
Quotation marks (', "), braces/parentheses/brackets ({}, (), []), and asterisks (*)



For more in-depth step by step instructions please refer to section 1.7.4 of the State Agency Manual.

Advice for filling out forms:

- When filling out forms for the first time, send a sample listing only two (2) or three (3) boxes first before completing the entire form. The PRA will review and edit the form, if necessary, and return it to you with additional guidance.
- Also send in a sample listing of two (2) or three (3) boxes when filling out forms for a new series for the first time.

Interfiling New Records into Boxes Already in Storage

New files can be sent for storage in boxes already held in the SRC. Listed below are basic instructions:

- Step 1:** Attach appropriate labels to each file (available from SRC through the PRA).
- Step 2:** Write the Customer ID, File Name, and SKP barcode number of the box the item is to be filed in on the label.
- Step 3:** Contact the Public Records Administration to initiate a pickup.
- Step 4:** Provide the number of files to be interfiled (no need for descriptions).
- Step 5:** The PRA will arrange a pickup and filing.

Records Destruction

Destruction of Records Stored in the State Records Center

Destruction of records is initiated by the PRA and carried out annually with the agency's consent. Destruction dates are based on Records Control Schedules approved by the State Archivist, Attorney General, and Auditor General.

- Step 1:** The PRA generates lists of boxes that are eligible for destruction, per records control schedules, for each agency.
- Step 2:** The box list is reviewed by PRA staff to identify and correct any possible errors.
- Step 3:** Comprehensive Certificates of Records Destruction are prepared.
- Step 4:** A destruction list and an accompanying Certificate of Records Destruction is sent to the corresponding agency.

Role of agency staff

- Step 1:** Review the Certificate of Records Destruction.
- Step 2:** Review the list of boxes that are eligible for destruction.
- Step 3:** Compare boxes on the list to the appropriate schedule (agency-specific or General Records Retention Schedule).
- Step 4:** Inform the PRA of any boxes that should not be destroyed.
 - Step 4a:** If known, inform the PRA of how much longer the identified box(es) should be kept.
- Step 5:** Await a replacement list and a Certificate of Records Destruction from the PRA (if a replacement is needed).
- Step 6:** Obtain the signature of the agency head (or designee) on the Certificate of Records Destruction approving destruction.
- Step 7:** Send the signed Certificate of Records Destruction to the PRA for countersignature from the State Archivist & Public Records Administrator.
- Step 8:** Keep the signed Certificate of Records Destruction once it is returned to you by the PRA. The Certificate of Records Destruction is not valid, and destruction is not permitted until signed by the

Agency Designee and State Archivist & Public Records Administrator.



The Certificate of Records Destruction is the **permanent, legal** replacement for the records destroyed. It must be maintained by your agency permanently.

Destruction of Records Stored in Agency Offices

Destruction of records that are held on-site at your office is initiated by the Agency and can be arranged by contacting the PRA. Destruction dates will only be approved if they are from a duly approved records control schedule.

- Step 1:** Prepare the Certificate of Records Destruction (Blank versions of this form are [available online](#) or from the PRA).
- Step 2:** Obtain the signature of the agency head (or designee) on the Certificate approving destruction.
- Step 3:** Send the signed Certificate of Records Destruction to the PRA.
- Step 4:** When the PRA returns the Certificate of Records Destruction signed by State Archivist & Public Records Administrator, ask to arrange for the SRC to pick up boxes if you require assistance from them to carry out destruction. Otherwise, carry out appropriate destruction on-site or hire another vendor.
- Step 5:** Keep the signed Certificate of Records Destruction as a permanent record.



All orders for records to be picked up for destruction will be handled separately from all other orders. This is to avoid the possibility of boxes that are being sent in for storage being confused with any boxes being sent for destruction. As a result, multiple deliveries may take place on the same day.

Helpful Resources

- Public Records Administration's promulgated regulation
 - <https://rules.sos.ri.gov/regulations/part/100-40-05-1>
- State Agency Manual
 - [PDF available online](#)
- Records Retention Schedules
 - [Records Management webpage](#)
- R. I. Gen. Laws for record keeping
 - [R.I. Gen. Laws § 38-3-6](#), Public records custody and disposal