

**LAKWOOD FIRE DEPARTMENT
STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINES**

SOG NUMBER: 600.02	RULE & REGULATION
DATE IMPLEMENTED: APRIL 18, 2023 DATE REVISED:	TITLE: RECORDS MANAGEMENT RETENTION AND DESTRUCTION

PURPOSE:

The Lakewood Fire District recognizes that the efficient management of its records, regardless of their form or medium, is essential to support its core functions, to comply with its legal and regulatory obligations, and to contribute to the effective overall management of the District and its Fire Department. Further, the Fire District recognizes proper methods of records disposal, and the determination of what records should be stored in the archives. This document provides the policy framework through which to meet this responsibility for proper disposal of records that are no longer of value.

SCOPE:

This provision shall apply to all Paid and Volunteer personnel of the Fire District and its Fire Department and applies to all Fire District and its Fire Department records.

DEFINITIONS:

1. For purposes of this policy “District” and “Departments” include the Lakewood Volunteer Fire Department, Fire Companies, The Fire Districts Administrative Office, Board of Commissioners, and any other entity or division within the Fire District that creates and receives Government Public Records.
2. Government Public Records: Any paper, written or printed book, document or drawing, map or plan, photograph, microfilm, data processed, or image processed document, sound-recording or similar device, emails, which have been made or is required by law to be received by a government entity.
3. For purposes of this policy “employees” include all paid and volunteer members of the Fire District and its Fire Department.

GOVERNING LAW:

The Lakewood Fire District Shall comply with all applicable State and Federal retention laws and regulations and in accordance with N.J.S.A. Title 47, Public Records, the Department of State, Division of Archives and Records Management (DARM), and N.J.A.C. 15:3 et seq.

GENERAL:

1. It is the responsibility of each local unit (department, fire company, division, area, etc.) to identify a records liaison who shall be responsible for ensuring the storage of active records in an appropriate manner which is consistent with this policy. Responsibilities of the local unit include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a) Create only the records the department needs.
 - b) Retain records according to the Retention Schedules set forth by the New Jersey Department of Treasury Records Management Services (RMS) for Municipal Agencies and for Municipal Fire Departments.¹
 - c) Maintain records in appropriate storage and locations.
 - d) Limit access to records of confidential information on a 'need to know' basis.
 - e) Secure access to records of restricted information (e.g., SSN, HIPAA, etc.) either by:
 - 1) Encrypting digital records.
 - 2) Keeping physical records locked or always supervised.
 - f) Preserve records of historical significance.
 - g) Dispose of records no longer required in the proper manner.
2. The Clerk of the Board of Fire Commissioners is the Official Records Custodian for the District, but the day-to-day responsibility for managing departmental records rests with each department with guidance from the Fire Administrator or designee. Departments shall maintain and dispose of all District records in accordance with the Retention Schedules mentioned above in section 1.b. Although the District may contract with third party commercial vendors for records storage, imaging and destruction services, the district remains ultimately responsible for the proper management of their records. In addition, each department is strongly encouraged to designate at least one day each year to allow its employees to focus on the requirements in the Records Management Policies & Procedures
3. Records shall be stored within the Firehouses or at Fire Headquarters as approved by the Fire Administrator. Record storage boxes and file drawers must be clearly marked with a description that is sufficiently effective to retrieve the information later.
4. No records shall be stored at any off-site facility, including district owned property, unless it is approved by the Fire Administrator.

¹ Link to Records Retention Schedule PDFs:

[State of New Jersey Municipal Agencies General Records Retention Schedule M100000-015](#)

[State of New Jersey Municipal Fire Departments Records Retention Schedule M180000-002](#)

5. The Fire Administrator or designee in consultation with the IT vendor shall maintain appropriate organization and physical storage environments for digital records. The IT vendor shall arrange for backup of District digital records. This backup shall be maintained off-site throughout the proper retention period, such that hardware, software, human error, or other failure will not abridge the required retention period of those digital records.

Records Disposal:

Departments looking to dispose of records shall contact the District Clerk and schedule to drop off the records at the Board Office. The records shall be disposed of by the Board Office in accordance with the Retention Schedules mentioned above in section 1.b. using “[ARTEMIS](#)” the Records Retention and Disposition Management System of DORES. Confidential records will be shredded, computer hardware will be destroyed appropriately through the IT vendor and all digital information will be erased or destroyed to assure all information has been fully obliterated.

Records Holds:

Records otherwise due for disposal may become subject to a litigation hold. The Boards Legal Counsel will notify departments of records that are subject to a litigation hold, and such records shall not be disposed of until the hold has been lifted. Departments shall maintain records subject to a hold in such a way that they are not inadvertently disposed.

Maintenance of Historical Records:

Some records should be maintained for historical value. Custody of these records should be awarded to archives, museums, or libraries. The Fire Administrator is available to review records to determine their archival value and/or to provide advice regarding the necessary procedures to properly archive materials.