

**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

# Memorandum

Date: DEC 23 2004

From: Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (005)

Subj: Preserving Electronic Mail Messages (EDMS FOLDER 275924)

To: Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Officials

1. The purpose of this memorandum is to provide additional guidance for employees and contractors relating to the creation, maintenance, and disposition of electronic mail (e-mail) records. VA Directive 6301, Electronic Mail Records, provides Department-wide policy on the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records created or received using e-mail applications.
2. Prior to deleting any VA e-mail message, the sender and recipient of the message must consider whether or not it meets the definition of a Federal record. All e-mail records pertaining to VA's mission should be printed and filed or stored in a retrievable manner for future use in accordance with VA and Federal records retention schedules. As part of the redesign of the Federal records management program, the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) has determined that agencies should be allowed to dispose of short-term temporary electronic records without requiring the creation of a separate paper or electronic recordkeeping copy (see Federal Register, Vol. 69, No. 212, dated November 3, 2004). When the final rule is published, this guidance will be incorporated into VA's electronic mail management policy.
3. The following provides the distinction between record and non-record messages and documents:
  - a. Messages or documents that are not used in the conduct of VA business and have no informational value, e.g., announcements of meetings and routine exchanges of information, are considered to be non-records.
  - b. Messages or documents that support official VA business and/or convey valuable information on VA's mission; e.g., position papers, reports, studies; information on VA programs, policies, decisions, and essential action conveying statements of policy (includes draft copies circulated for comment); working papers, or the rationale for decisions or actions; and electronic exchanges that support the formulation of policies and programs, are considered to be records.

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- c. A signature on a document does not make it a record. Many types of electronic documents such as manuals, reports, and maps may not contain signatures, but they can still be records. Also included as records are "calendar" and "task lists" on e-mail applications.
4. A complete e-mail record should be retained by the originator (recipient copies may be records under certain circumstances). If e-mail is sent back and forth and the most recent message has the entire sequence of messages, the originator needs to keep only that final message, the attachments and other data such as the sender, receivers, date, and time. The originator should not delete the names of the sender and addressee, the date, or a time stamp from a letter on paper.
5. If further information or assistance is needed, please have a member of your staff contact Loise Russell, Director, Records Management Service (005E3), at (202) 273-7501.

  
Robert N. McFarland