

**BY ORDER OF THE COMMANDER  
OF ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE**

**ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE INSTRUCTION  
33-363**



**28 APRIL 2011**

***Communication and Information***

***BASE VITAL RECORDS RECOVERY***

**COMPLIANCE WITH THIS PUBLICATION IS MANDATORY**

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This publication implements Air Force Manual 33-363, Management of Records. To provide guidance for identifying, protecting, and storing vital records in the possession of individual units/organizations, and the base records staging facility. This instruction outlines the steps necessary for implementing emergency protection of vital records which will be acted upon when the installation Commander declares an emergency is imminent. It applies to all organizations at Robins Air Force Base. It will be the responsibility of the Chief of the Office to see that this guidance is implemented and carried out with due caution and expediency. Functional Area Records Manager(s) (FARMs) may be required to support the Base Records Management (BRM) Office in the salvage/preservation of the FARM's organizational records. Refer recommended changes and questions about this publication to the Office of Primary Responsibility (OPR) using Air Force (AF) Form 847, *Recommendation for Change of Publication*; route AF Forms 847 from the field through the appropriate functional's chain of command. Ensure that all records created as a result of processes prescribed in this publication are maintained in accordance with Air Force Manual (AFMAN) 33-363, *Management of Records*, and disposed of in accordance with Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS) Records Disposition Schedule (RDS) located at [www.my.af.mil/gcss-af61a/afrims/afrims](http://www.my.af.mil/gcss-af61a/afrims/afrims) See Attachment 1 for a glossary of references and supporting information.

## Chapter 1

### RECORDS

#### 1.1. Vital Records

- 1.1.1. Essential to the continuation, resumption or reconstruction of business in the event of a disaster or unexpected event.
- 1.1.2. Important to preserving the rights of the agency, its staff and the public.
- 1.1.3. Necessary to establishing legal and fiscal responsibility, status and positions.

#### 1.2. Vital Records Inventory

- 1.2.1. A typical work center will normally not have more than 7% of its records identified as vital.
- 1.2.2. Vital records maintained in our work center are listed by their official Air Force title and Table and Rule (records identified on a file plan with a "V" are vital). The list also indicates where the records are located. This list should be maintained by the organizational FARM in their FARM Continuity Book.
- 1.2.3. Staged records will not be included in the vital records inventory. Standard Forms 135, Records Transmittal and Receipt, constitute an inventory of the records stored in the Staging Area. Each office that has staged or retired records maintains a copy of the SF 135. Duplicate copies are also maintained by the Functional Area Records Manager (FARM) and the Records Management office. The Records Management office has full responsibility for the recovery and/or salvage of records held in the Staging Area.
- 1.2.4. Each FARM will maintain the Vital Records Recovery Instruction in the mandatory FARM notebook which they are required to keep. In the event of a commander-directed evacuation the Vital Records Recovery Instruction must be removed along with any work center records.

## Chapter 2

### EVACUATION

#### 2.1. Equipment:

- 2.1.1. Unplug all equipment and appliances.
- 2.1.2. Cover computers, printers, etc., with plastic covers. Shredder bags and trash bags are ideal for this purpose. Ensure computers and printers are cool before covering. If a central processing unit is on the floor, place it on top of a desk or table and cover it. Cover file cabinets and bookcases with plastic covers. Recommended list of recovery/disaster supplies can be found on page 6 of this instruction. Every unit with Vital Records identified on their file plan should develop a disaster recovery kit of supplies.

#### 2.2. Records:

- 2.2.1. Collect all vital records and remove them from the building. If possible, remove their corresponding guide cards to facilitate keeping records separated and for identification purposes. Standard staging boxes, NSN 8115-00-117-8249, are ideal for carrying bulk records. Place paper products in staging area boxes. A staging box will hold one cubic feet of records. Full letter-size file drawers contain approximately two cubic feet of records and legal size drawers contain approximately three cubic feet.
- 2.2.2. Alert your FARM and the Records Management office.
- 2.2.3. If the base staging warehouse is not damaged; FARMS will report to base staging warehouse with all records for salvage processing, with their disaster supplies. BRM Office and FARMS may be required to perform 24 hour duty during the salvage/preservation process.

#### 2.3. Records Stored on ERM:

- 2.3.1. All vital records stored on the ERM server will list a "V" after the folder name to identify it as vital. The 78<sup>th</sup> Air Base Wing Communications Directorate (SC) will be responsible for all electronic vital records stored on the ERM server. The ERM server is backed up daily. In the event of an emergency situation, the 78 ABW SC/NCC will retain possession of backups and if necessary, implement offsite storage at the Federal Records Center. These tapes will be used in restoration of all vital ERM records.

- 2.4. **Web-based Records:** Web based records are already stored offsite and need not be included in our plans as most of the web based paper or electronic records are informational copies only. Almost all units use web based programs.

## Chapter 3

### RECOVERY AND RESTORATION

**3.1. Building Re-entry:** Re-enter the building only after fire and safety officials have given authorization to do so.

**3.2. Temperature and Humidity:** Turn off heat. The air conditioning system, if still operable, should remain on. It is imperative to bring the temperature and humidity down, as mold will appear within 48 hours in unventilated areas made damp and humid by water. Mop floors or pump out water. If possible, open outer doors to let in fresh air. Ventilate the area with large electric fans. Cool, dry, and well circulated air will retard activation of mold and mildew spores.

**3.3. Evaluation:** Evaluate the degree of damage. Determine if records should be air dried, frozen, or discarded. If not sure, contact BRM Office. Do not destroy any record that requires retention of more than one year. Suggested vendors authorized for use for air drying, freezing, etc can be found on page 7.

**3.4. Assess and Document the Damage:** Identify any records that are not intact. Use large plastic bags or fiberboard boxes to retrieve miscellaneous papers. Designate a central location to collect material accumulated under direction from BRM Office. Load most important records and mark priority of records.

**3.5. Organize:** Gather staff and workers and establish a record keeping mechanism. Try to keep the records organized and identifiable. Gather any needed supplies. Contact freezing and/or drying vendors only after coordination with the Records Management office. Move all affected materials out of the area and set up for air-drying. Pack and transport materials, carry out air drying procedures, monitor work of outside vendors, clean and restore storage area. Return treated records to their locations.

**3.6. Preserve Provenance of Documentation:** Ensure boxes are identified in some way to show "office ownership." BRM Office recommends marking boxes same as if being staged in warehouse, with exception of Accession Number and Location. If the contents need to be transferred to another box or container ensure they are correctly identified. Be sure the order of files remains intact, if possible.

#### **3.7. Set Up Drying Area(s):**

3.7.1. Only slightly damp documents should be air-dried. The process is to expose as much paper surface as possible to circulating air in order to reduce environmental qualities favored by mold: high temperature, high humidity, and stagnant air. Select an area where heat and air conditioning are still operable, and where space permits ease of activity. Set up tables, floor fans, and dehumidifiers, if necessary. Cover work surfaces with plastic sheeting. Direct fans to blow into the area, but do not train them directly onto work surfaces. Physical distortion of the paper will occur. Glossy paper will, unless handled carefully, stick together when dry. Boxes of water damaged records should be transported, preferably, in a refrigerated truck to an off-site professional recovery operation facility.

3.7.2. Blot bound volumes with unprinted newsprint or paper towels at intervals of two to ten pages, changing the interleaving as frequently as possible and as often as necessary until dry. Blotting paper should be removed regularly, and interleaving should be changed at the

same time until the volumes are dry. Bound volumes may be partially opened at this time to allow drying by fans. Wet volumes of coated pages should not be allowed to dry unless thin sheets of Mylar polyester are inserted between pages. When coated paper dries together, the clay coating that makes it shiny bonds with the clay coating of the next page, producing an irreversible bond stronger than the paper. It is then virtually impossible to separate the pages.

3.7.3. Dehumidification is accomplished by pumping dry air into the building, and damp air out. This method is useful for slightly damp records. Records dry on site without having to be moved. It can be a very noisy process. Dried records will be physically distorted. This is an excellent method for drying all paper, books, photographs, film, negatives, X-rays, microfilm/fiche and mylar film, but it can take two to three weeks drying time.

3.7.4. Jackets and cartridges containing X-rays, microfilm, microfiche, transparencies and slides need to be replaced to eliminate mold and/or mildew outbreaks. Keep film media submerged in water. Film must be hung in a dry environment.

3.7.5. Audio and video tapes have corrosion potential and need to be processed ASAP. Transfer diskettes to plastic containers filled with clean cold water. Audio tapes, video tapes and computer disks need to be dried, cleaned and copied, do not put contaminated disks into systems as further damage will occur to equipment. Sterilize material exposed to contaminated water or air (mold spores) with thymol (a colorless crystalline phenol with an aromatic odor, obtained from thyme oil or made synthetically - used as a fungicide and preservative obtainable from the Records Management office, 6-3744, 3857, or 5164). Comply with AFOSHA and EPA standards.

**3.8. Fan Records:** The goal is to separate damp and moderately wet sheets of paper from each other to allow circulating air to dry them. Remove files from boxes, and stand them up in milk crates or other non-rusting supports. Fan the contents of folders so that pages are not in a solid block. If fastened pages are significantly wet, it may be necessary to remove fasteners.

**3.9. Re-fan:** Check records at least daily and re-fan to expose damp areas of pages to dry air. Continue to do this until records are dry to the touch, with no damp spots remaining.

**3.10. Monitor Climate:** The warmer and drier the air, the faster records will dry. Large floor fans should circulate air, but not be trained on documents. Leave fans running 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Relative humidity of 35-50% is best. Dehumidifiers may be necessary.

**3.11. Do Not Try to Clean Records Until Dry:** After the documents are dry, mud becomes dirt, which can be brushed off with cheesecloth or soft-bristled brushes.

**3.12. Rebox Records When Dry:** Use new boxes. Be sure to transcribe any records ownership information onto the boxes. Occasionally contents will not fit back into a box because they have swelled and warped in the drying process.

**3.13. Freezing/Drying Options:** To stabilize water damaged materials, freeze at temperatures below 20° Fahrenheit. Storage retains records in the condition in which found, and prevents further deterioration while records await treatment. It also provides time to assess the damaged material and to restore the building affected. Frozen records can be recovered by the following methods. Any may be preferable to a particular situation. They are listed in order from least to most expensive.

3.13.1. Freeze-Drying: This process pulls moisture out of frozen materials to a large-surface coil from which the water evaporates. (It is the process on which a frost-free freezer operates.) It runs by cycling temperature up to the thaw point, so distortion of paper is pronounced and coated papers will stick together. It is done off-site chamber, so security of records may be compromised. Works best on clay coated paper with less than six hours exposure to water. Drying time could take four to five weeks.

3.13.2. Thermal Drying and Vacuum Thermal Drying: Operate on the clothes-dryer principal. Relatively inexpensive, this process pulls water out of records by heat. The main disadvantage is that the heating does paper no favors. In fact, it is the process used in "artificial aging" experiments. It is useful for drying temporary records with a relatively short retention period. Should not be used for permanent records, unless they will be photocopied or microfilmed after recovery and the originals discarded.

3.13.3. Vacuum Freeze-Drying: Operates by "sublimation" in which crystalline ice is converted to steam just at 32° Fahrenheit without becoming water. Papers dried by this method are not cockled; water-soluble inks do not run; coated papers do not stick together. It is particularly useful for records affected by mold, as sterilization can be done after drying at little additional cost. The primary disadvantage is that it is expensive.

**3.14. Provide Security:** While records are in the drying process, damaged records must be protected by security equal to that provided in the stacks.

**3.15. Special Concerns:**

3.15.1. Fire-damaged records: Extreme caution must be used in handling paper damaged by fire. The records will be both brittle and wet. Pieces of paper toweling or unprinted newsprint should be placed under each charred page before moving the item. The towel or newsprint serves two purposes: to absorb moisture and to provide support. The corners of the towel or newsprint are then used to lift and move the document.

3.15.2. Muddy records: Do not attempt more than minimal cleaning of wet records during the removal phase. Bound volumes may be gently dabbed with a sponge or soft cloth to remove mud or surface dirt, but do not rub or brush. Do not attempt to open water-damaged bound volumes. Loose textual records, if already soaked, may be rinsed, but do not wash in the sense of using friction on the page. Attempting to remove mud from wet paper forces dirt further into the paper's fibers. Defer cleaning until documents are dry.

3.15.3. Photographic media and microfilm: Stabilize wet black and white photographs, negatives, and microfilm by sealing in polyethylene bags and placing in plastic (not metal) garbage cans under cold, clean running water. Do not allow them to dry. They may be left in running water for up to three days before being transferred to a professional recovery unit, but the earlier recovery starts, the better. Color photographs must be transported to a professional photo-finishing laboratory within 48 hours after water immersion since the color layers will begin to separate. If this is not possible, freeze them. (There is some inherent risk with freezing color photographs since ice crystals may form and rupture the emulsion layer.)

3.15.4. Preparing materials for freezing: Vacuum freeze-drying refers to vaporizing water below 32 degrees Fahrenheit. This procedure does not allow the ice to thaw prior to vaporizing. This method also causes less damage to the material. Place materials designated to be vacuumed or freeze-dried in interlocking plastic milk crate containers, which are

lightweight and provide air circulation and proper drainage. Loosely pack materials, unwrapped, in crates until crate is approximately three-fourths full. Wrap bound volumes with freezer or wax paper and place on their spines in crates. Do not pack volumes too tightly to allow for air circulation. Place oversized material on uncolored cardboard, and wrap in packages not more than two inches thick. Burned and charred materials require special care in handling, as the paper or bindings are very brittle. Support single sheets on uncolored cardboard and secure them with another sheet of cardboard or heavy paper.

### **3.16. Summary:**

- 3.16.1. Time is our greatest enemy.
- 3.16.2. Freeze or refrigerate paper records if an immediate decision cannot be made.
- 3.16.3. Stabilize the environment, high humidity is conducive to mold development.
- 3.16.4. Prioritize and sort documents.
- 3.16.5. Any document that has begun to cockle or wrinkle will not be returned to a pre-loss condition although it will be suitable for reading, handling or copying.
- 3.16.6. If mold has developed on documents, it can be cleaned off and sanitized, but residual staining may remain.

**3.17. Keep Chiefs of Office of Record (COR) Apprised:** Inform and apprise CORs; ensure they are fully aware of damage situation. Provide complete information about what happened, how it happened, and steps taken in the recovery process.

**3.18. Disposition of Salvaged Records:** Return all files to the filing cabinets, disk containers, etc. Retain any documentation concerning the destruction of vital records or records that could not be salvaged.

**3.19. Air Force Records Information Management System (AFRIMS):** Keep in mind that the work center file plan and all required labels are recoverable from AFRIMS.

**3.20. Chief of Office of Record and Records Custodian Reminders:** Take appropriate action to protect vital records (consider the feasibility of storing copies of electronic media at another building, or copy and forward them to another activity with instructions to return them to your unit when requested). Protect all classified, FOUO, and Privacy Act records. Store backups in a fire-and/or humidity-resistant safe or storage cabinet. Utilize Attachment 2-Checklist for Vital Records Recovery in the event of catastrophe.

- 3.20.1. Verbiage may be changed to be utilized to more specific organizations, if necessary. Contact your designated organizational BRM first.
- 3.20.2. Disaster drills utilizing Vital Records will be planned at least semi-annually to include a response from all records professionals assigned at Robins Air Force Base.

**Chapter 4****SUPPLIES****4.1. Disaster Supplies to Keep On Hand**

Paper Towels

Shredder Bags or Trash Bags

Black Felt Tip Markers

Pencils

Packing Knife

Freezer/Silicone paper

Writing Tablets

Copy of Vital Records Recovery Guide

Pressure Sensitive Tape, Water Resistant, NSN 7510-00-6656

Large Sponge

Scissors

Terrycloth Towels

Plastic Pail

Pallets

Boxes, NSN 8115-00-117-8249

Disposable Gloves

Labels

Brooms

Flashlights & Batteries

Nametags for Disaster Team

## Chapter 5

### VENDORS

**5.1. List of Vendors for Vital Records Recovery:** BMS CAT, 303 Arthur Street, Forth Worth TX 76107, <http://www.gmscat.com>, 1 (800) 433-2940 for 24-hour service, office: (817) 332-2770, FAX: 817-332-6728

Obtain blotting paper, plastic bags, bakery bread trays (drying surface for papers) and any other available supplies the Commissary, BX, Wal-Mart, etc.

VWR Scientific, PO Box 29027 Phoenix AZ 85038, 1 (800) 932-5000

American Freezer Services Inc, 455 South 75<sup>th</sup> Avenue Suite 103, Phoenix AZ 85029, 943-5100

Micrographies, Comgraphix Inc, 11226 N 23rd Avenue, Suite103, Phoenix AZ 85029, 943-5100

**5.2. VACUUM/FREEZE DRYING:** Document Reprocesses, Eric Lundquist, Pres. 41 Sutter Street, Suite 1120, San Francisco CA 94104 – 1800-4-DRYING

Dehumidification: Airdex Corp, Don R. Hartsell Resources Plaza 2700 Post Oak Blvd Suite 1520, PO Box 460088 Houston TX 77056, (713) 963-8600

**Chapter 6**

**FORMS**

**6.1. Prescribed and Adopted Forms**

**6.1.1. Prescribed Forms:**

No forms prescribed

**6.1.2. Adopted Forms**

AF Form 847, Air Force Publication/Form Action Request

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**Attachment 1**

**GLOSSARY OF REFERENCES AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

*References*

AFMAN 33-363, *Management of Records*, 1 March 2008

*Abbreviations and Acronyms*

**AF**—Air Force

**AFMAN**—Air Force Manual

**OPR**—Office of Primary Responsibility

**RDS**—Records Disposition Schedule

**FARM**—Functional Area Record Manager

**BRM**—Base Record Manager

**AFRIMS**—Air Force Records Information Management System

**COR**—Chief Office of Record