**Vital Records**

**Vital records contain information critical to the continuation or survival of our business. Such records are necessary to continue operations without delay under abnormal conditions. They contain information necessary to recreate the organization’s legal and financial status and to preserve the rights and obligations of stakeholders, employees, customers, investors and the public.**

**Vital records** are characterized by one of the following:

* They are related to the recovery of critical systems and equipment and will need to be produced quickly.
* They are unique and not easily reproducible or the cost of reproduction or replacement would be considerable.
* Their loss or unavailability would cause significant loss to the organization and prevent resumption of priority activities.

The lifespan of vital records is contingent on the active business process.

**Other Record Categories:**

**Important –** These records and information on a variety of media are determined to be of some value to an organization in restoring operations to a normal state following a disaster. If destroyed, these records are replaceable at moderate cost.

**Useful –** These records are useful to the uninterrupted operation of the business. They are replaceable, but their loss could cause temporary inconvenience.

**Vital records are:**

* Irreplaceable; they cannot be obtained from another source, inside or outside the organization (such as a list of employees by site);
* Not necessarily historical; historical records are often classified as permanent, while a vital record may be yesterday’s bank balance;
* Frequently short term; they have value for only a short period of time before they become obsolete, 24 hours in the case of a bank balance; and
* A small percentage of the total; they comprise no more than 3 to 7 percent of the total records on the retention schedule.

**Objectives of a vital records program are:**

* To recreate the financial position of the organization;
* To fulfill obligations to customers, employees, and other outside interests (such as stockholders);
* To provide inventories of properties and assets;
* To resume data processing ; and
* To resume daily operations.

**Components of the Vital Records Schedule include:**

* The record title or description as listed on the normal retention schedule;
* The medium of the original vital record;
* The method of duplication
* The protection site once the vital record is duplicated
* The frequency of protection;
* A code to designate the accumulation or replacement of the record on a regular basis; and
* Any special instructions regarding the duplication and storage of the record.

**Some Examples of Vital Records:**

1. ***Financial Records***: These records include ledgers, registers, accounts receivable, notes, loans, and records that prove moneys owed to the company as well as payments made.
2. ***Employee Records***: Records that show the amounts currently due to employees for payroll and benefits, etc.
3. ***Manufacturing Records***: This includes production specifications, engineering drawings, current inventory lists, research and development data, etc.
4. ***Insurance Policy Information***.
5. ***Ownership Records***: Includes deeds, leases, titles, patents and trademarks, registration numbers, franchise information, and capital investments.
6. ***Major Contracts and Agreements***: Including all amendments.
7. ***Corporate Records***: Items such as minutes of the directors meetings, incorporation papers, and organization charts may be part of this category.
8. ***Negotiable Instruments***: This may include such items as stock shares, notes, bonds, checks, etc.