



REBECCA OTTO
STATE AUDITOR

STATE OF MINNESOTA

OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

SUITE 500
525 PARK STREET
SAINT PAUL, MN 55103-2139

(651) 296-2551 (Voice)
(651) 296-4755 (Fax)
state.auditor@osa.state.mn.us (E-mail)
1-800-627-3529 (Relay Service)

Statement of Position Retention of Records for Volunteer Firefighter Relief Associations

Relief associations are governmental entities that receive and manage public money. Therefore, they must follow state guidelines that govern the retention of records. Until recently, a relief association did not have authority to destroy records unless that association had received specific individual approval from the Records Disposition Panel.¹

Records Retention Schedule

A records retention schedule is a written list of types of records that an organization may have in its possession or control with instructions on how long each type of record must be retained. Because organizations that have similar activities and responsibilities oftentimes have similar types of records, a general records retention schedule may be developed for use by multiple organizations. Many organizations, including counties, cities, and towns, choose to adopt a general records retention schedule instead of creating and obtaining approval for their own individual schedule.

The Volunteer Fire Relief Association Working Group created a General Records Retention Schedule for volunteer fire relief associations. This general schedule was submitted by the Apple Valley Fire Relief Association to the Records Disposition Panel. The Panel approved the general schedule in April 2012.

Options for Retaining Records

A relief association can choose to adopt in its entirety the new general records retention schedule, to modify the general schedule to create a unique customized schedule, or to develop its own individualized records retention schedule. *If a relief association chooses none of these options, the association must permanently retain all of its records.*²

Relief associations that adopt the general schedule and notify the Minnesota Historical Society of their adoption may destroy certain types of records after they have been

¹ The Records Disposition Panel is a State panel consisting of the attorney general, the state auditor, and the director of the Minnesota Historical Society.

² As governmental entities that receive and manage public money, relief associations are subject to Minnesota Statutes, section 138.17. Pursuant to section 138.17, records cannot be destroyed except at the direction of the Records Disposition Panel.

Reviewed: October 2015
Revised: July 2014

2009-2002B

This Statement of Position is not legal advice and is subject to revision.

maintained for a specified length of time. Relief associations that adopt the general records retention schedule should notify the Minnesota Historical Society before using it. If a relief association chooses to modify the general records retention schedule or to create its own schedule, the association must submit the proposed schedule to the Records Disposition Panel for approval before the customized schedule may be used.

After a relief association has adopted a schedule, notified the Historical Society of its adoption or obtained approval from the Records Disposition Panel, and maintained the records for the length of time required by the schedule, the association may destroy the records.

A record or log that lists all records that have been disposed of should be maintained. The log should identify the record, the category governing its retention, the date on which it was created, and the date on which it was destroyed.

The prohibition on destruction of records also requires relief associations to take such steps as are necessary to protect their records from deterioration, mutilation, loss, or destruction.

Documents containing personnel data should be retained in a secure manner indefinitely. Documents related to the establishment and governance of the relief association should also be retained indefinitely for both practical and historical reasons.

Additional Information

The general records retention schedule, instructions on how to use the schedule, and a form for use in notifying the Minnesota Historical Society that the schedule has been adopted can be found at:

http://www.mnhs.org/preserve/records/docs_pdfs/Complete_MFRASchedule2012.pdf.

Additional information regarding management of records for volunteer fire relief associations can be found in the Office of the State Auditor's Statement of Position on this topic, at:

<http://www.auditor.state.mn.us/default.aspx?page=20110527.008>.