



## Records Management in the Time of Covid-19

Many of us may have our disaster plans ready to respond to fires, floods, winter storms and even active shooter incidents. But many offices are finding that their Continuity of Operations plans are less prepared to handle long-term threats to our staffs. If you have transitioned to working from home, please keep these records management principles in mind.

### *Access/Use Copies of records*

If you are creating access or use copies of records to help facilitate working at home, make sure that you are handling them properly. Is there sensitive or personally identifiable information in the records that needs to be protected? While most access or use copies fall into an “Administrative Use” retention category, it is still important that they are disposed of appropriately when you are done with them. Consider bringing them back to the office for shredding.

### *Sheltering Records in Place*

- Move your collections to the safest place available such as vaults or inner rooms with no windows and higher floors.
- Protect against water damage by raising boxes off the floor and covering loosely with plastic sheeting especially if you have known leaks.
- If you have environmental or security monitoring, make sure you can access the data remotely.

Not sure about a term? Check out the Records Management Glossary at

<https://www.sec.state.ma.us/arc/arcrrs/glossary.htm>

### *Disinfecting Records*

While ideally the bulk of your permanent records are weathering the current situation safely locked in climate controlled vaults, there may be some records that may need to be handled. If you are concerned about disinfecting these records, the following guidance has been compiled by COSTEP MA (Coordinated Statewide Emergency Preparedness Massachusetts):

- COSTEP MA recommends extreme caution in cleaning collection objects. It would be preferable, if possible, to temporarily restrict or limit physical access to the records. *Current research indicates that the virus persists on paper for 4-5 days.*
- It is inadvisable to use liquid or aerosol cleaners on books, unbound papers or prints, or painted surfaces. Guidance on historic objects, furniture, and decorative arts is not clear at this time, but generally, conservators tend not to recommend aggressive cleaning and strong chemicals.
- Isolation strategies can occur at the object level: double-bag smaller objects in zipper-style plastic bags, and labeling it with object information, date, and reason for isolation. At the collection level, the easiest isolation strategy is to entirely shut off access for a period of time.
- It is not recommended to take large scale disinfecting actions for entire collections, or entire storage spaces, as temporary isolation, suggested by the CDC and WHO guidelines on how long the virus can live on surfaces, may do a more reliable job of eradicating the virus with none of the potential damages to collection objects.
- If large-scale disinfecting strategies are unavoidable, consider enacting your salvage priorities, removing your most important collection objects away from areas to be disinfected, into temporary isolation. Once collection objects are removed, disinfect surfaces such as shelving units by applying cleaning solutions to a cloth or paper towel and then wiping surfaces down.

Obviously this situation is constantly evolving. If you are interested in more recommendations on records care, check out the COSTEP MA website at

<https://mblc.state.ma.us/costepma/index.php/cultural-institutions/mitigation/public-health-emergencies>