

Records

Retention

Guidelines

*One of the most frequent questions about office procedures our staff is asked is...
“How long do I have to keep these records in my files?”*

*We hope this **Record Retention Schedule** will help you find the answers to that question for many of those documents that use up valuable file space in your office.*

The actual amount of time to keep a specific document may be longer depending on the circumstances of your church or the contents of the documents.

The list has been gathered from several different sources: The Presbyterian Historical Society, The Church Treasurers Alert! Newsletter, and the Business Record Retention Schedule from Yeo & Yeo, P.C., CPAs. If there was a difference between sources of how long a particular record should be retained the longer period was used in this list. The list is a suggestion and in no way, shape or form meant to be legal advice. You will need to use your own judgment and legal counsel in any matters that are not certain.

Questions?

*Call Presbytery of Lake Huron
800-621-6905*

August 4, 2009

Suggested Schedule for Retention of Church Records

Key: AT means After Termination

AD means After Disposal

A

- Accident reports and claims (*settled cases*) 7 years
- Accounts payable ledgers and schedules 7 years
- Accounts receivable ledgers and schedules 7 years
- Annual fiscal reports **Permanently**
- Annual reports **Permanently**
- Appointment books 3 years
- Articles of Incorporation **Permanently**
- Audit reports **Permanently**

B

- Bank deposit slips 3 years
- Bank reconciliations 3 years
- Bank statements 7 years
- Baptismal records **Permanently**
- Bills of lading 6 years
- Brokerage statements (*annual*) **Permanently**
- Budgets and expense reports 3 years
- By-laws/charters (*including all amendments*) **Permanently**

C

- Capital stock and bond records: ledgers, transfer registers, stubs showing issues, record of interest coupons, options, etc. **Permanently**
- Cash books **Permanently**
- Cash journal 7 years
- Cash projections 2 years
- Cash receipt records 3 years
- Cemetery records **Permanently**
- Certificate of incorporation **Permanently**
- Charts of accounts **Permanently**
- Checks (*cancelled but see exception below*) 7 years
- Checks, *cancelled for important payments, i.e., taxes, purchases of property, special contracts, etc. (checks should be filed with the papers pertaining to the underlying transaction)* **Permanently**
- Church bulletins (*historical copy*) **Permanently**
- Church contribution receipts to donors 7 years
- Church newsletters (*historical copy*) **Permanently**
- Church register **Permanently**
- Construction records **Permanently**
- Contracts of employment 7 years AT
- Contracts, mortgages, notes and leases (*expired*) 7 years
(*still in effect*) **Permanently**

- Copyright registration **Permanently**
- Correspondence (*routine*) with customers and/or vendors **1-2 years**
- Correspondence (*general*) **3 years**
- Correspondence (*legal and important matters only – that which documents an office’s administrative structure, procedures and policies, it also includes email.*).... **Permanently**
- Correspondence (*personnel*) **7 years AT**
- Credit memos **3 years**

D

- Data for updating mailing list **1 year**
- Deeds, mortgages, and bills of sale **Permanently**
- Deposit slips **3 years**
- Depreciation schedules **Permanently**
- Disability claims **7 years AT**
- Dismissal records (*employee and volunteer*) **Retain for the applicable statute of limitations period following date of dismissal or resignation.**
- Dividend register **Permanently**

E

- Electronic payment records **7 years**
- Employee benefit plan records **7 years**
- Employee expense reports and receipts **7 years**
- Employee manuals or handbooks (*all editions or versions*) **Permanently**
- Employee payroll records (*W2, W4, annual earnings records, etc.*) **7 years**
- Employee personnel records (*after termination*) **7 years AT**
- Employee salary and wage rate changes **7 years AT**
- Employee statement (*acknowledges understanding of terms and conditions of employment and agrees to them*) **Employment or until a foreseeable lawsuit is dealt with.**
- Employee withholding exemption certificates **7 years AT**
- Employment applications (*hired*) **Permanently**
- Employment applications (*not hired*) **1 year**
- Employment contracts **7 years AT**
- Employment taxes **7 years**
- Expense analyses and expense distribution schedules **7 years**

F

- FICA **7 years**
- Fidelity bonds **7 years AT**
- Financial statements (*end-of-year, other audited months optional*) **Permanently**
- Fire damage reports **6 years**
- Fixed asset purchases **Permanently**
- Form 941 **7 years**
- Form I-9 **3 years after date of hire or 1 year after employee’s termination**
- Forms 1099 and 1096 **7 years**
- Freight bills **4 years**
- Funeral records **Permanently**

G

- Garnishments 3 years
- General journal..... 7 years
- General ledger (*and end-of-year trial balances*) **Permanently**

H

- Handbooks and manuals **Permanently**
- Housing allowance designations 7 years

I

- Incorporation records **Permanently**
- Independent contracts 7 years AT
- Inherited property valuations **Permanently**
- Insurance policies..... **Permanently**
- Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, policies, etc. **Permanently**
- Internal reports (*miscellaneous*)..... 3 years
- Internal work orders 3 years
- Inventories of products, materials, and supplies 7 years AD
- Invoices (*fixed assets*) 7 years AD
- Invoices (*to customers, from vendors*)..... 7 years

J

- Job descriptions..... **Employment or until a foreseeable lawsuit is dealt with.**
- Journal entries – year end **Permanently**

L

- Leases..... 7 years AD
- Legal correspondence **Permanently**
- Licenses..... 1 year AT
- Loan agreements **Satisfaction plus 20 years**
- Loan payment schedules 7 years

M

- Magnetic tape and tab cards..... 1 Year
- Manse allowance designations..... 7 years
- Maps (*if of historical importance*) **Permanently**
- Marriage records **Permanently**
- Meeting notes 1 year
- Minute and record books of sessions, trustees and staff meetings **Permanently**
- Mortgages 7 years AT

N

- Newspapers/newsletters of the church..... **Permanently**
- Non-profit corporation information
(Update filed with the State of Michigan annually.).....**Permanently**
- Notes (*cancelled*) **7 years**
- Notes receivable ledgers and schedules**Permanently**

O

- Offering Envelopes * **Please see note on last page.**
- Option records (*expired*)..... **7 years**

P

- Patents & related papers.....**Permanently**
- Payments to pensioners..... **7 years**
- Payroll journal..... **10 years**
- Payroll records, summaries, and tax returns
(includes forms W-4, W-2, W-3, 941, 1099, etc.) **7 years**
- Pension/Profit sharing retirement plan, tax information,
returns, and correspondence**Permanently**
- Performance Evaluations**Employment or until a foreseeable lawsuit is dealt with.**
- Personnel files (*terminated*) **7 years AT**
- Petty cash records **7 years**
- Photographs.....**Permanently**
- Physical inventory tags **3 years**
- Plant ledger**Permanently**
- Policies and Procedures manuals and statements**Permanently**
- Property appraisals by outside appraisers**Permanently**
- Property records-including costs, depreciation schedules,
blueprints and plans.....**Permanently**
- Purchases journal **7 years**
- Purchase orders and invoices..... **7 years**

R

- Receipts and other evidence substantiating employee
business expenses reimbursements **7 years**
- Receiving sheets..... **1 year**
- Records Transfer List
(a list of records sent to Presbyterian Historical Society)**Permanently**
- Reference forms (*employee and volunteer*)**Permanently**
- Requisitions..... **1 year**
- Resource files.....**Active**
- Retirement and pension records**Permanently**
- Royalty journal..... **7 years**

S

- Safety records..... **6 years**
- Savings bond registration..... **Permanently**
- Screening forms (*employees and volunteers*)..... **Permanently**
- Stenographers' notebooks..... **1 year**
- Stock and bond certificates (*cancelled*)..... **7 years**
- Stock ledger **Permanently**
- Stockroom withdrawal forms..... **1 year**
- Subsidiary ledgers..... **7 years**

T

- Tax returns and other IRS documents..... **7 years**
- Telephone logs/message book duplicates **7 years**
- Time books/cards **7 years**
- Trademark registrations and copyrights..... **Permanently**
- Training manuals **Permanently**
- Travel plans/arrangements **1 year**

V

- Vendor contracts **7 years**
- Voucher register and schedules **7 years**
- Voucher for payments to vendors, employees, etc.
(*includes allowances and reimbursements of employees, officers, etc.,
for travel and entertainment expenses*) **7 years**

W

- W-2/FICA records **7 years**
- Wills, bequests **Permanently**
- Work-related injury and illness reports
..... **5 years following the end of the year to which they relate.**
- Worker's compensation reports **7 years**

Until Utility Expires

- Brochures
- Promotional materials
- Mailing lists
- Warranty documents

***Offering Envelopes** – The IRS does not require churches to use offering envelopes. If used, they may help substantiate donations but are not necessary once a receipt or statement listing the donation has been received by the donor. Good practice would be to keep offering envelopes a reasonable time after receipts or statements have been issued so that disputes by donors can be resolved. One year after the due date of the tax for the return period to which the envelopes relate would be the minimum time to store envelopes; but longer is OK if storage is not a problem. Many churches put a statement on the receipt asking donors to verify the receipt is correct and report any discrepancies to the Treasurer or Financial Secretary. This note will also state that the envelopes will be retained by the church for a limited period and will be destroyed on a certain date.