

Chapter 2

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Create and Maintain Records

To give people in your organization access to reliable reference materials, create and maintain records that contain complete and accurate information.

Records include books, documents, maps, drawings, photographs, letters, vouchers, and any other medium used to record information, such as disks, audio/video tapes, or microfilm.

Use neutral, non-judgemental language to record information, particularly personal information about individuals. Do not include unqualified opinions or unsubstantiated comments in your files. Organize your records to facilitate access, control and retrieval of the information by:

- Consistently coding and classifying records.
- Keeping a file list that identifies the title of each record, where it's stored, the period it covers, and how long it will be retained.
- Noting all copies of confidential records on the file list.
- Storing records in good condition, secure from damage, theft or unauthorized access.

Records can be divided into four categories to streamline management: corporate, administrative, operational and applicant/resident records.

1) CORPORATE RECORDS

Under the Society and Co-operative Association Acts, you're required to maintain corporate records at your registered address. Include in these records:

- A list of your current members.
- Minutes from your Annual General Meetings and other general meetings and Board meetings. While not required, keeping minutes from your committee meetings is a good governance practice.
- Copies of the society constitution and bylaws
- Copies of the co-op Memorandum and Rules and all amendments.
- Legislation and agreements governing your operations.

Generally, these records are not confidential but should be stored in a secure location. Society members are entitled to have access to your corporate records. The Co-op Act spells out which records members are entitled to have access to. The Act does not include minutes of directors meetings or documents approved by directors. However, most co-ops have a policy or a provision in their Rules giving members access, excluding any confidential parts.

In addition, store your corporate seal in a locked location.

2) ADMINISTRATIVE RECORDS

Administrative records cover functions such as finance, insurance, meetings, agreements, reports, policies, procedures, facilities management, legal issues, office equipment and supplies, and personnel. Maintain most of these records so they're easily accessible.

Personnel records contain personal information, which is confidential and should be stored in a locked cabinet. Some legal issues may be confidential as well.

However, residents and other members of the public have access to public records such as your financial documents, which show how the organization manages funding.

3) OPERATIONAL RECORDS

These records are related to your mandate to manage social housing, and include housing program development and administration, information on the construction phase and ongoing operations, operational issues, and resident support services, associations and programs.

Operational records are not usually confidential, but need to be carefully maintained because they include important documentation on inspections, capital maintenance, and property development and operation.

Building Records

Store copies of the building records for each development to provide information on the history of the building. Keep records of the following documents:

- Building specifications.
- As built drawings.
- Contract documents.
- Guarantees and warranties for contract work, equipment and appliances.
- Equipment maintenance manuals.
- Equipment operating instructions.
- Serial and model numbers of equipment, and an equipment inventory.
- An inventory of tools and supplies.
- Site inspections.
- Suite inspections and all work orders.

During the initial construction phase, copies of most of these documents can be obtained from your architect, engineer and/or contractor. Include information on major renovations or purchases so the records are up to date. The inspection information will help you plan short and long-term maintenance requirements for your budget.



Maintenance Inventory and Records

Keep a maintenance inventory for each unit that lists information on the:

- Make, model, colour and serial number of each appliance.
- Paint colour.
- Colour and type of drapes/blinds.
- Colour and type of floor coverings and/or carpet.

In addition, store information on the materials and appliances in common areas such as the recreation room, lobby and laundry room in the maintenance inventory.

Maintenance records provide a history of maintenance performed on every product and repairs to reduce liability, such as:

- When a suite was last painted.
- When carpets were installed and cleaned.
- When a refrigerator or stove was replaced or repaired.
- Regular inspections of fire alarms, elevators and boiler servicing, needed to obtain warranty repairs.
- Records of snow removal, sand application or ice blast dates.
- Safety checks to playground equipment and railings.

The maintenance records and maintenance inventory list can be combined or kept as separate files, whichever system works best for your organization.

Maintenance Specifications and Standards

You also need to keep records of product brands and specifications to match products, such as the grade and colours of paint, and to find replacement parts when repairs are needed.

BC Housing can provide a complete list of product quality specifications to use as a guide. Just ask your Property Portfolio Manager for a copy.

Statistical Information

BC Housing sometimes uses statistical data to evaluate the feasibility or cost effectiveness of proposals. For example, we may conduct an energy survey to assess the costs of different types of lighting or insulation to determine whether the savings warrant changing products. Your operating agreement requires you to provide statistical information if requested.

4) APPLICANT AND RESIDENT FILES

All personal and financial information you collect about applicants and residents is confidential and should be securely stored in locked, fireproof filing cabinets to prevent unauthorized access or theft. In addition, ensure any discussions you have about this information remain confidential.

Applicant and Housing Lists

If you maintain your own applicant registry, keep a list of eligible applicants large enough to fill 15 to 25 per cent of the units in the development or portfolio, so you can fill vacancies when they arise. Keep the list current by contacting applicants at least once a year to determine whether they still need housing and if there have been any changes in the information on their applications.

Resident files typically contain:

- Applications for housing or housing subsidy.
- Income verification documents.
- Tenancy/occupancy agreements.
- Move in and move out suite inspections.
- Resident profile (List of suite occupants, next of kin, etc.).
- Rent payment details.
- Correspondence.

It's also useful to develop a housing list of all the units in each development with information on:

- The size of each suite.
- The number of bedrooms in each unit.
- Any modifications such as grab bars, lower counters, and wide doorways for wheelchair access.

Then when you are answering applicants' questions or offering housing to new residents, all the information about the development is easily accessible. In addition, groups with HOMES BC developments need to maintain a list of applicants interested in the non-RGI units.

For information on the services provided by The Housing Registry, see Tab 2, Resident Relations, Chapter 1, [page 18](#), or contact the BC Non-Profit Housing Association at 604-527-8859 or 1-800-494-8859.



Access and Security

Restrict access to confidential files to authorized staff, directors or volunteers to use in connection with their official duties. Use passwords to protect access to confidential computer files. And make sure computer records are backed up regularly to give you an alternative source if the equipment fails.

The records you create doing business with BC Housing may be governed by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. The legislation gives us access to some records to respond to public requests for information and to conduct audits. Please refer to [page 11](#) for more information on how the FOIPP legislation affects your record keeping.

Retention and Disposal

The Documents Disposal Act governs how long to retain records and how to dispose of them. Some records need to be kept longer than others. Develop a records retention schedule that protects and suits the needs of your organization, and complies with the Act. Here are some guidelines:

- Corporate records provide a valuable history of your organization, and are kept permanently.
- Administrative records are kept for varying periods. Most financial records are kept for seven years. General ledger and financial statements are kept permanently. Guarantees and warranties are kept for the period they apply.
- The retention periods for operational records also vary. Keep building records such as drawings and specifications as long as the building exists, plus seven years. Information on service contracts is kept for the duration of each contract, plus seven years.
- Applicant files are kept until an applicant becomes a resident, then the applicant information forms part of the resident file. Resident records are kept for seven years after people leave subsidized housing.

Keep records at your office, or store some long-term records off site with a records storage company. When you dispose of paper records, hire a bonded, confidential shredding company to shred the documents. When you dispose of computer equipment, simply deleting files is not sufficient. Ensure all the information on the hard drive, computer disks and any other memory systems cannot be retrieved.

For more information on how to permanently remove computer files or manage your records, call our Records Officer at 604-439-4750, local 286.
