

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS SERVICE

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Outline of Minimum Standards
for An Agency's Documentary Protection Program

This program is limited to the protection of documents indispensable to the operation of the Government in a national emergency. While plans for protecting documentary materials valuable or irreplaceable for non-emergency administrative, research, or cultural activities should also be formulated by the agencies having custody of such materials, higher priority should be given to indispensable materials, which are restricted to the relatively small core of documents that would be needed to carry on emergency operations under emergency conditions. The problem of developing plans for protection rests basically on two questions: (1) What documents would be indispensable to an agency in order to resume essential emergency operations, if all its records were destroyed or rendered useless by enemy action, and (2) what can be done most economically to insure the availability of these documents?

1. Identification of Indispensable Documents

(a) Standards for the determination of indispensable documentary materials cannot be established categorically. Records selected for protection must be of such character that their loss would seriously imperil the performance of functions essential to the maintenance of the U. S. Government under emergency conditions.

(b) Priorities as to indispensability are suggested as follows:

(1) Records vital to the military effort of the nation--
the operations of the Armed Forces.

(2) Records vital to the mobilization and protection of the
material and manpower resources of the nation.

(3) Records vital to the maintenance of public health,
safety, and order.

(4) Records vital to the protection of the rights of
individual citizens.

(c) The protection plan should include provisions for the selection in the future of recurring types of documents of an indispensable character.

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and for the periodic replacement of the documents originally selected with later, more current documents.

(d) Attention should also be given to identification of indexes, etc., essential to the use of documents earmarked for protection.

2. Alternative Protective Measures

(a) The most positive practical means of insuring the availability of essential documents is to provide for the storage of security copies at some point judged to be safe from the hazards of modern warfare.

(b) The need for protective measures for essential records should be coordinated with overall security planning. The decentralization of activities to safer areas, or "fringe dispersal" in the National Capitol area, will not necessarily obviate the need for storage of security copies of indispensable records at another alternate location.

(c) Cost factors should weigh heavily in the determination of the protective measures chosen. Security copies may be obtained by:

(1) Assembling, in the case of duplicated material, extra sets of documents.

(2) Providing for the production of extra copies of documents, in the case of currently accumulating material.

(3) Microfilming and paper-print photocopying, especially in the case of existing documents where no extra copies are available.

Note: It is advisable that plans for security microfilming be coordinated with the National Archives and Records Service, which is establishing limited facilities for centralized microfilming in the Washington area.

(d) Storage space for security copies, in addition to being located in a less critical target area, should meet the minimum requirements for the housing of records, i.e., safety from fire and other hazards.

3. Organization of the Protective Plan

(a) Responsibility for planning should be definitely assigned to an official appropriately situated to obtain necessary coordination and compliance.

(b) Accurate account of the materials selected for protection and of the point of storage of security copies must be maintained. These records in turn should be included among those given protection.

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(c) Certain limited facilities for the storage of paper records and microfilm are being established by the General Services Administration. Agencies not having adequate existing facilities are advised to consult the National Archives and Records Service.

(d) Measures are needed to guarantee that personnel will be on hand who adequately understand the protected collections or who can readily be trained to give service on them.