

- Develop forms for gathering information.
 - Create a questionnaire to assist offices in identifying vital records.
 - Use the information collected in Worksheet #14, or create a form listing essential functions and all records supporting those functions.
- Identify vital records.
 - Vital records may include part or all of a series or group of records.
 - These records usually include personnel records and system documentation.
- Review protection needs for each vital record and compare with current program.
- Develop a restoration and recovery sub-plan.

1. Identify Vital Records

To begin identifying vital records look at the essential functions and their supporting critical processes and services. In Worksheet # 14, the records needed to perform essential functions were already identified. With that worksheet, determine those records that are necessary for emergency operations and/or the recovery or the continuation of the essential functions and list them in Worksheet # 17, Vital Records.

Many records might be considered important, but not all are vital. Remember:

- Only a small percentage of the records are vital, that is, essential to emergency operations and to the organization's continuance, or that are difficult or impossible to replace.
- Although records designated as permanent are often vital, the length of time a record is retained does not necessarily mean the record is vital--nor does a record once designated as vital remain so forever.
- Vital records may be in any format or medium. Original records are not necessary. It is the information, not the medium that is most important.
- If the information is contained in a medium other than paper, consideration must be given to the technology required to access the information and the availability of that technology in the event of an emergency.