

Bluemel & Dhillon CPAs, LLP

Records Retention Guide

It's a fact, everyone must keep records. The questions of which records to keep and for how long to retain them are very common. To help answer these questions, please refer to the following suggested guidelines for records retention. We have listed both business and individual records. Take note of the records that should be kept permanently in a safe place. Many other records, however, can be disposed of after a defined period of time. Generally, both manual and computer kept records have the same required retention period. As always, please feel free to call if you have any questions.



Individual Records

Retention Period

Bank statements, including reconciliations and deposit slips	7 years
Checks (canceled—see exception below)	7 years
Checks: Canceled for important payments, i.e. taxes, purchases of property, special contracts. Checks should be filed with paper pertaining to the underlying transaction.	Permanently
Contracts, mortgages, notes, and leases	7 years after expiration
Deeds and bills of sale	Ownership period plus 7 years
Garnishments	3 years
Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, etc.	Permanently
Investment records	Ownership period plus 7 years
Notes receivable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Property records, including costs, depreciation schedules, year end trial balance, and blueprints and plans	Ownership period plus 7 years
Retirement and pension records	Permanently
Tax returns and worksheets, revenue agents' reports, and other documents relating to determination of income tax liability	Permanently

Business Records

Retention Period

Accident reports/claims (settled cases)	7 years
Accounts payable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Accounts receivable ledgers and schedules	7 years
Attendance records	4 years
Audit reports	Permanently
Bank statements, including reconciliations and deposit slips	7 years
Checks (canceled—see exception below)	7 years
Checks: Canceled for important payments, i.e. taxes, purchases of property, special contracts. Checks should be filed with paper pertaining to the underlying transaction.	Permanently
COBRA records	6 years after applicable period
Contracts, mortgages, notes, and leases	7 years after expiration

Business Records

Retention Period

Corporate stock records	Permanently
Deeds and bills of sale	Ownership period plus 7 years
Employee medical records and analysis as required by OSHA	30 years after termination
Employment applications (non-hires)	1 year
Employment tax returns	4 years after tax is paid or due whichever is later
Expense reports	7 years
Financial statements for year end (others optional)	Permanently
Form I-9	3 years after employment begins, 1 year after termination, or whichever is later
Garnishments	3 years
General and subsidiary ledgers, year end trial balance	Life of company plus 7 years
HIPPA records	6 years
Insurance records, current accident reports, claims, etc.	Permanently
Inventory records	7 years
Investment records	Ownership period plus 7 years
Invoices to customers and from vendors	7 years
Labor contracts and Union agreements	Permanently
Material safety data sheets or some identification of substance used or found	30 years after terminated use of hazardous substance
Medical and exposure records relating to toxic substances	40 years
Minute books of directors, stockholders, bylaws, and charter	Permanently
Notes receivable ledgers and schedules	7 years
OSHA logs (employers must maintain a log that records workers' job related injuries, illnesses, dates, and nature of incidents)	6 years
OSHA training documentation	3 years
Payroll records and summaries	6 years
Personnel files	6 years after termination
Petty cash vouchers	3 years
Property records, including costs, depreciation schedules, year end trial balance, and blueprints and plans	Ownership period plus 7 years
Purchase orders (purchasing department copy)	7 years
Receiving sheets	1 year
Retirement and pension records	Permanently
Sales records	7 years
Scrap and salvage records (inventories, sales, etc.)	7 years
Tax returns and worksheets, revenue agents' reports, and other documents relating to determination of income tax liability	Permanently
Time books and cards	7 years
Trademark registration and copyrights, patents and related papers	Permanently
Training manuals	Permanently
Vouchers for payments to vendors, employees, etc. (includes allowances and reimbursements of employees, officers, etc., for travel and entertainment expenses)	7 years