

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Transitory Records in Electronic Messages

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INTRODUCTION

1. What is the purpose of this FAQ?

This FAQ provides additional information about applying GRS 5.2, item 010, Transitory Records, to electronic messages. Electronic messages can fall into one of four categories: permanent, long-term temporary, short-term temporary, or transitory. This FAQ specifically addresses the transitory category.

2. Whom do I contact for further information about this schedule?

Please contact NARA's General Records Schedules Team at GRS_Team@nara.gov with questions about this schedule.

3. What is a transitory record?

The GRS provides two criteria for identifying a transitory record:

- the records are required for only a short time (generally less than 180 days), and
- the agency does not require the records to meet legal or fiscal obligations, or to initiate, sustain, evaluate, or provide evidence of decision-making.

Both criteria must be met for the record to be transitory. If they are not both met, the record may still be temporary, it is just not a transitory record. For examples of transitory records, see GRS 5.2, item 010.

4. What electronic messages are NOT transitory?

Electronic messages that are not transitory include those that:

- contain information that is necessary to adequately and properly document the activities and functions of the agency
- provide documentation of agency decisions and commitments reached orally (person-to-person, phone, video, or in conference)
- convey information of value on agency activities if the electronic mail message adds to a proper understanding of agency operations and responsibilities
- document the formulation and execution of policies and decisions
- denote actions or decisions taken by agency Capstone officials (Capstone officials are defined in GRS 6.1)
- provide evidence related to fiscal or legal rights and obligations



This list is not comprehensive. These messages may still be temporary (or even permanent), but not transitory.

5. Can records identified as transitory be culled from electronic mail?

Yes. NARA expects that agencies will cull non-record, spam, personal, and transitory records from email accounts, especially those appraised as permanent. This applies to email managed under an agency-specific schedule or GRS 6.1 (also known as the Capstone Approach). For more information about culling email see [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) about GRS 6.1, Email Managed Under a Capstone Approach, questions 30-32](#). Agencies may also apply other disposition authorities to dispose of email. See [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) about GRS 6.1, Email Managed Under a Capstone Approach, question 22](#), for further information on applying other disposition authorities, including GRS 5.2, item 010, to email.