

# > FACT SHEET

## E-MAIL

E-mail messages and their attachments, like other corporate records, are subject to the Public Records Act 2005. This fact sheet provides advice for IT managers and records managers in public offices and local authorities about managing e-mail.

### > BACKGROUND

The use of e-mail has become widespread. Many communications (both internal and external) which used to happen on paper now take place electronically. This has meant a transfer of much of the control and responsibility from the corporate to the individual user.

### > E-MAIL AND GOOD RECORDKEEPING – SOME DO'S AND DON'TS

- > Do help your staff to manage their e-mail by giving them advice on appropriate business rules, structure and context and by having templates to make this easy.
- > Do identify which duplicates/versions are to be kept as corporate records. One issue with e-mail systems is that often messages are copied to many people – which creates a number of surplus or duplicate copies of the same document. It is important to identify which of those copies are to be kept as corporate records.

This can be done by either keeping all corporate messages for appraisal later or by having a combination of business rules, training and system configuration which means you keep only those messages which are needed for corporate purposes. The latter approach is both more economical and more efficient.

- > Do, as far as possible, build recordkeeping requirements on the existing design features of your e-mail management system and the practices of your users. Most e-mail applications stop users altering sent/received messages and contain basic metadata

about sender/recipient and time. Business rules and practices can be built on these functions.

- > Do, where appropriate, ask suppliers to customise packages. Most proprietary systems contain some of the components needed. Your e-mail system will need to be linked to your electronic recordkeeping system(s) so connections can be made between different messages and with records in other formats. These connections can be improved through system design/configuration and through corporate policies and procedures.
- > Do provide adequate storage space for each user.
- > Do be careful with requests to delete e-mail to free up server space, prevent accumulated e-mail impacting on system performance or for other reasons unrelated to the value of the messages as records. These requests create a risk of inappropriate disposal.
- > Do not encourage people to print e-mail if you have a suitable electronic recordkeeping system. Printed messages are not ideal as records of e-mail transactions because they do not include all the information contained in an electronic message. To keep e-mail in its original electronic form you will need a recordkeeping system which has been set up to make sure the messages cannot be damaged or changed and that people can access them for as long as needed.



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- > Do not automatically delete e-mail if it hasn't been appraised. Having some way to separate corporate e-mail from personal and surplus/duplicate e-mail can help you administer your records. Remember managing e-mail efficiently from a systems point of view does not necessarily imply it is being managed from a corporate record point of view. E-mail which is a public record or local authority protected record can only be disposed of with authorisation from the Chief Archivist.

### > DISPOSAL AUTHORITY FOR E-MAIL

Much e-mail is of only temporary value. Archives New Zealand's General Disposal Authority GDA3, *General Housekeeping Records*, allows the routine disposal of e-mail which has no further administrative use, without further authorisation from Archives New Zealand. This includes:

- > personal correspondence,
- > circulated information received for information only,
- > trivial work related material (such as reminder notes and room bookings),
- > copies of records already in the record keeping system and
- > copies of documents kept for reference purposes only.

If you are unsure about any of the advice in this fact sheet, or need further details, please contact Archives New Zealand at [rkadvice@archives.govt.nz](mailto:rkadvice@archives.govt.nz)



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