

BARREN COUNTY ECONOMIC AUTHORITY

E-Mail Record Retention Policy

Purpose: Define a policy for e-mail record retention. Retention periods for e-mail records will vary according to the information the messages contain and the functions the messages perform.

Definitions:

E-mail messages are any communication supported by e-mail systems for the conduct of official agency business internally, between other state, local, and federal agencies, and externally with vendors, clients, and others. This definition applies equally to the contents of the communication, the transactional information associated with each message, and any attachments to the body of the message.

Transactional information is information about the e-mail message. It can include the name of the sender and all recipients, the date and time the message was created and sent, the host application that generated the message, and all of the systems and computers the message was routed through. Some or all of this metadata may or may not be a visible part of the message. The federal courts have ruled that this information is a vital part of the message itself,³ and is an important consideration when storing email messages.

Policy

Non-record Material: If the message was not created or received as part of the business of the BCEA, it is considered non-record material. Non-record material has nothing to do with the actions of the agency and should be deleted immediately. Examples may include:

Spam: "junk" mail, advertising, unsolicited and unwanted

Unsolicited E-mail: advertisements from vendors, news articles, non-work-related announcements, etc.

Personal Messages: emails received from friends or colleagues or personal business. Personal emails should be limited, excessive personal email could lead to disciplinary action.

Informational and reference materials: These e-mails have no meaningful value for documenting policy, establishing guidelines or procedures or certifying transactions and may be deleted as soon as they are no longer needed.

Temporary Records: Have some documentation value but do not need to be retained permanently. Retention of these e-mails is based on administrative, fiscal, or legal value. These records may be printed and retained in a paper file for future reference. General correspondence and activity records may be kept for up to 2-years. Items such as meeting notices will be kept in hard copy only and be placed with agency meeting materials.

Permanent records: These e-mails are programmatic records of the BCEA that have lasting historical value because they provide evidence or document decisions, procedures and essential transactions. These e-mails should be printed and kept with the agency's project documentation, policy binders or other easily identified documentation method.

When retaining e-mails, the final thread of the email, so long as it has not been change is the only message that needs to be retained.

Adopted: _____