Electronic Records Transfers – Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I send permanent records to the Archives in an electronic format?

A. Yes. The Delaware Public Records Law treats all media formats equally, including electronic records. The Archives is able to maintain electronic records permanently.

Q. Can I send temporary records to the Archives in an electronic format?

A. Yes, you may send temporary records in an electronic format if their retention period is 10 years or more. Be sure to consult with your agency's Records Analyst before initiating the electronic records transfer.

Q. How does Archives get the data in an electronic records transfer?

A. Electronic records can be sent to the Archives on an external hard drive, CD, or DVD. Permanent records not sent on external hard drives will be migrated by the Archives to an external hard drive for long-term preservation on a schedule. Please see our Acceptable Formats List for the approved file formats for electronic records transfers.

Q. How do I transfer confidential electronic files?

A. Confidential electronic records can be transferred in the same way as non-confidential files—by copying them to an external hard drive, CD, or DVD. The drive can then be placed in a tamper-proof bag (example) and picked up by the Delaware Public Archives.

Alternatively, data can be uploaded to SharePoint, shared with designated Archives staff, and removed from the agency's SharePoint once it has been downloaded by the Archives.

The Archives can also facilitate secure file transfers via Secure File Transfer Protocol (SFTP) in coordination with agency staff, but large amounts of data (100 GB or more) should be transferred via external hard drive or SharePoint.

If desired, the data may be encrypted prior to transfer, provided the Archives receives the encryption key. All transferred files are stored in secure, access-controlled vaults with badge-restricted entry points and 24/7 video surveillance. Access is limited to authorized Archives personnel.

Q. I only need to transfer a few electronic files, like the last three years of annual reports, for permanent preservation. Do I need to put those few files on a CD, DVD, or external hard drive?

A. No. For single items or for a few small items, such as annual reports or agency publications, please provide them in one of the approved formats listed in the Acceptable Formats List

Q. Do external hard drives last forever? If not, how does the Archives handle drive failure over time?

A. External hard drives are typically reliable for 5-6 years. The Archives migrates data to new drives on a schedule to ensure that the data is kept on a reliable drive.

Q. Do I need to provide a Content List with a line for each electronic file I'm archiving?

A. The Archives will generate a file/data inventory list based on the data you send electronically. However, the utility of this inventory list will be based on how well you name the files. The Archives' ability to service files back to your agency within a short turnaround time depends on the strength of your file naming conventions. Use clear, natural naming conventions that will make sense to someone who is new to working with your data. Avoid acronyms that may not be widely understood. Write full dates as the year, month, and day without spaces, slashes, or periods; for example, write January 1, 2025 as 20250101.

Good Examples:

- 2024 annual report.pdf
- 20250407 Board Meeting Minutes.docx

Bad Examples:

- img_003.jpg
- doc-1.docx

Q. Do I need a separate hard drive for each record series when transferring electronic records?

A. No. Unlike paper records, the Archives can accommodate multiple record series on a single external hard drive. Organize files by placing each record series in a folder named for that series. For example, Annual Reports should be kept in a folder labeled GAR-014 Annual Reports. However, when using CDs or DVDs, please ensure each disc only contains one record series.

If you have a question not addressed here or for further assistance, please contact your [Records Analyst](#).