



RIGHT-OF-WAY OPERATIONS MANUAL

Chapter Ten Records Management

April 2023

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1-1 FILE SYSTEM

1-1.1 Records Classification

The objective of the Right-of-Way Bureau's records management system is to maintain and use an efficient file system for Bureau documents. The Bureau identifies each record by subject. All records also are segregated into groupings, or "Record Series," according to various activities and functions of the Right-of-Way Bureau. The Section responsible for the performance of a function maintains the Record Series pertaining to that function.

1-1.2 Subject Identification

The importance of clearly identifying the Record Series becomes apparent when it is necessary to retrieve certain information. The importance of identification takes on additional meaning in terms of record disposal.

1-1.2.1 Project-Related Records

It is the responsibility of the person (Right-of-Way Agent, District Supervisor, Section Supervisor) who creates the document to ensure all applicable information, including proper project identification, uniform project number, designation, parcel number and landowner's name, is listed on each piece of correspondence generated. If the person creating a document does not have all the necessary information for project identification, the following sources can be used:

1. EIS (Engineering Information System) Master List. This is the primary guide for identifying active projects.
2. Card File. This is the alphabetical or land description card file, which is in the Real Estate Services Section.
3. Right-of-Way Plans. These plans are in the Design Section.
4. General Files. These files are in the Real Estate Services Section.
5. Parcel Files. These files are in the Real Estate Services Section.

1-1.2.2 Subject-Related Records (Non-Project-Related Records)

The general filing system will be used for administrative and operational records (non-project-related). This system is uniform for all Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) offices. Users should follow the procedures outlined in Chapter I of the Montana

Department of Administration's ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***.

1-1.2.3 Project or Subject Identification

Incoming project and subject-related correspondence that is not identified by project number and parcel number, or by subject, should be identified by the first person able to categorize the records for filing. Project or subject information should be written in the upper right-hand corner of the correspondence.

1-1.2.4 Outgoing Correspondence

On all project-related outgoing correspondence, the following items are to be included in the subject heading:

Project I.D. & Uniform No.
Designation
Parcel, Owner
Correspondence Reference Code

SAMPLE: NH 24-2(10)56 0921-009
Helmville Jct. - East
Parcel 19 - Delbert F. Barham
Ref: 66-JFK

1-1.2.5 Correspondence Reference Codes

A correspondence reference code will be used to identify the source of all correspondence prepared by Right-of-Way Bureau Headquarters Office personnel. A listing of reference codes is shown in Figure 11-1A.

Code No.	Used By:
60	Chief, Right-of-Way Bureau, and personnel not assigned to any of the following sections.
61	Manager, Lands Section
62	Manager, R/W Design/Plans Section
63	Supervisor, Appraisal Section
64	Manager, Acquisitions
65	Supervisor, Utilities Section
66	Supervisor, Real Estate Services
67	Supervisor, Special Programs
68	Manager, Access Control Section

ADMINISTRATIVE CORRESPONDENCE REFERENCE CODES

Figure 11-1A

The code consists of the term, Ref: followed by one of the two-digit numbers listed below, a dash, and the initials of the head of the section in which the correspondence originated. For example, "Ref: 60 — JHH" will identify correspondence prepared by the Chief of the Right-of-Way Bureau.

The use and placement of references codes will be as follows:

1. All Correspondence, Whether Original Or Reply. The writer's code is to be placed directly beneath the subject heading on the first page.
2. Replies To Correspondence Bearing A Reference Code. The first writer's reference code should be shown on replies to serve as a destination code. It is to be placed directly beneath the address heading on the first page of the reply, preceded by the term, "Your Ref:." Thus, "Your Ref: 60 — JHH" will indicate that a memorandum is in reply to correspondence that originated by the Chief — Right-of-Way Bureau.

Please note that other organizations (e.g., the Federal Highway Administration) also use correspondence reference codes. Their codes are to be used in the above manner when replying to correspondence from them.

As a rule, reference codes should be used as destination codes only when replying to correspondence bearing the first writer's reference code. They should not be used to direct original correspondence within the recipient organization.

1-1.2.6 Cross Reference

If a record pertains to more than 1 project/parcel, a cross-reference sheet (Form 74) should be used, provided the number of pages covering the topic is more than 8. If the number of pages is less than 8, copies of the document should be made for each file.

1-1.3 File Identification

Use of consistent file identification procedures facilitates easy location of files for use by Right-of-Way Bureau staff.

1-1.3.1 Project-Related Files

These files are labeled and filed according to the instructions outlined in Chapter II of the ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***. The Real Estate Services Section also marks files with parcel number information. This is done by stamping the parcel number under the project number that appears on the file, as in the example shown below:

ER6-1(78)59 3334-078
MT 200 ROAD REPAIRS
Parcel 15

The project-related general files that are in the Right-of-Way Bureau Sections are placed in front of the parcel files, except for the Real Estate Services Section files for individual highway projects. Those individual highway project files are filed separately from parcel files and are filed by project number.

1-1.3.2 File Indexes by Section/Subject

The Bureau maintains alphabetical/numerical cross-reference indexes by the Record Series designations and Record Series numbers that pertain to each Right-of-Way Section. These indexes are in the Records Retention Schedule Index: Numerical by Record Series, see Figure 11-1C, and the Records Retention Schedule Index: Alphabetical by Record Series Designation, see Figure 11-1D.

Records Series Headings. Each record bears a heading that consists of 2 parts:

- a 2-digit number that identifies the relevant Section of the Right-of-Way Bureau, corresponding to the presently assigned Section reference number, and
- a 2-digit number that identifies the function pertaining to the Record Series.

Record Series heading examples are shown below:

Example 1: 62-01 Refers to Design/Plans Section - Program & Engineering Files

Example 2: 63-03 Refers to Appraisal Section - Operations Files

All files in each Section are grouped together and file drawers follow a numerical sequence according to Record Series numbers.

No official records are to be put in a file drawer which do not have a Record Series Number and designation. Each Right-of-Way Section is responsible for assigning Record Series numbers and designations for their files. When a new Record Series is established, the Real Estate Services Section Records Manager must be advised of the new designation and number.

1-1.4 **Green-Stamp Procedure**

The Bureau's goal with records management is to retain records that might be needed for future reference and avoid the retention of unneeded duplicates. The green-stamp procedures achieve this goal. File documents bearing the green stamp are considered "permanent" records that the Bureau keeps until either the retention date passes, or the document is microfilmed. The Right-of-Way Section that has the green-stamped document is responsible for maintaining it. Green-stamp procedure guidelines are detailed in Chapter IV of the ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***.

1-1.5 **File Folders**

Department-wide guidelines for project and subject-related file folders appear in Chapter II of the ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***. In addition to the files required under those guidelines, Right-of-Way Bureau Sections may establish working files for the use of their own personnel. Working files are set up in file folders that are most practical for the individual Section. These files are kept in the Section performing the related activity. Working files contain no original correspondence, documents, or permanent file copies. These files may be discarded when they no longer are useful to the Section's personnel.

Record Series Number	Record Series Description	Retention Period (Years)			Disposition
		Office	Rec. Ctr.	Total	
60	Bureau Administrative/Operational Records				
60-01	Correspondence/Subject Files (Operations) <i>(Note: These are the true administrative records.)</i>	2	3	5	Permanent; Offer to Archives
60-02	Administrative Files <i>(Note: These are informational files).</i>	2	3	5	Destroy
62	Right-of-Way Design/Plans Section Records				
62-01	Program and Engineering Project Case Files <i>(P&E files; right-of-way appraisal and acquisition authorization, plan changes and correspondence.</i>	1	2	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section to be filed in Acquisition Files, microfilmed.
62-02	Strip Maps <i>(Note: Copies only — originals in Planning and Statistics.)</i>	P	NA	P	Permanent (admin. value)
62-03	Title Memoranda (Primary-Real Estate Services Section) Certificate of Survey (C.O.S.) – Non-record Ownership plats – Non-record.	LOP	NA**	LOP	These are working files and are very active during the **length of project. Primary copy of TM is transferred to Real Estate Services Section (when received from Title Company) and filed with acquisition files. Retention period commences after final voucher is submitted from FHWA. Non-record items are destroyed.
62-04	Subject Files (Operations)	1	NA	1	Offer to archives after review.
62-05	Plans and Maps	P	NA	P	Paper: Permanent (admin. value) Microfilm: Permanent (Security Copy)
62-06	Railroad Plat Maps	1	P	P	Permanent (admin. value)
62-07	Maps of Highway Projects in Federal Forests	NA	P	P	Permanent (admin. value)
	* Retention Period commences after final voucher is submitted.				
63	Appraisal Section Records				
63-02	Fee Appraiser Case Files	2*	NA	2*	Destroy
63-03	Subject Files (Operations)	10	NA	10	Destroy
	* Retention Period commences after final voucher is submitted.				
64	Acquisition Section Records				
64-01	Paralegal Subject Files	5	NA	5	Destroy
64-02	Consultant Contracts	1	7	8	Destroy. Retention period commences after contract expires.

FILE INDEX
NUMERICAL BY RECORD SERIES NUMBER

Figure 11-1C

Record Series Number	Record Series Description	Retention Period (Years)			Disposition
		Office	Rec. Ctr.	Total	
65	Utilities Section Records				
65-01	Railroads Project Files	1*	2*	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section for Microfilm.
65-02	Utilities Project Files	1*	2*	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section for Microfilm
65-03	Subject Files (General)	1	NA	1	Review yearly, remove superseded or updated material and offer to Archives.
65-04	Railroad Signal Agreement Files	1*	2*	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section for microfilm and offer to Archives.
	* Retention Period commences after final voucher is submitted.				
66	Real Estate Services Section				
66-01	Department-owned Real Property *Hardcopy kept 5 years, then filmed. **Microfilm kept 15 years after sale.	2 10	3 0	5* 10**	Destroy
66-02	Audit Function Files	3	0	3	Destroy
66-03	Statistical Data on Acquisitions	10	0	10	Offer to Archives
66-04	Audit Reports-Internal/External	6	0	6	Destroy
66-05	Certificates of Right-of-Way (Secondary)	3	0	3	Destroy
66-06	Fee Appraiser Contracts	3	0	3+	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10).
66-07	Landowner Damage Claims	3	0	3	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10).
		After settlement			
66-08	Title VI Files	5	0	5	Destroy
66-09	Acquisition Index Cards	P	0	P	None
66-10	Acquisition Files	1*	2*	3*	Microfilm and destroy hardcopy. Film kept permanently.
66-14	Outdoor Advertising Control Operations	10	0	10	Offer to Archives
66-15	Outdoor Advertising Control – Permit Files	2	0	2	Offer to Archives
		After permit withdrawn			
66-16	Outdoor Advertising Control – Legal Files	15	0	15	Destroy/Offer archives random samples.
		After settlement			
66-17	Junkyard Control Files	10	0	10	Destroy/Offer archives random samples.
		After compliance			
66-18	Excess Land Files	1	0	1	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10).
		After transaction			
66-20	Real Estate Services Section Operational Files	3	0	3	Offer to Archives
	* Retention period commences after final voucher is submitted.				

FILE INDEX
NUMERICAL BY RECORD SERIES NUMBER

Figure 11-1C (Continued)

Record Series Number	Record Series Description	Retention Period (Years)			Disposition
		Office	Rec. Ctr.	Total	
66-10	Acquisition Files – Real Estate Services Section	1*	2*	3*	Microfilm and destroy hardcopy. Film kept permanently.
66-09	Acquisition Index Cards – Real Estate Services Section	P	0	P	None
66-02	Audit Function File – Real Estate Services Section	3	0	3	Destroy
66-04	Audit Reports – Internal/External – Real Estate Services Section	6	0	6	Destroy
66-05	Certificates of Right-of-Way (Secondary) – Real Estate Services Section	3	0	3	Destroy
64-02	Consultant Contracts – Acquisitions Section	1	7	8	Destroy – Retention period commences after contract expires.
66-18	Excess Land Files – Real Estate Services Section	1	0	1	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10)
		After transaction			
62-07	Federal Forest Highway Projects/Maps – Design/Plans Section	NA	P	P	Permanent (admin. value)
63-02	Federal Forests Highway Projects/Maps – Design/Plans Section	2*	NA	2*	Destroy
66-06	Fee Appraiser Contracts – Real Estate Services Section	3	0	3*	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10).
66-17	Junkyard Control Files – Real Estate Services Section	10	0	10	Destroy/Offer Archives random examples.
		After compliance.			
66-20	Operational Files – Real Estate Services Section	3	0	3	Offer to Archives.
66-07	Landowner Damage Claims – Real Estate Services Section	3	0	3	Merge into Acquisition File (66-10).
		After settlement.			
66-16	Outdoor Advertising Control – Legal Files – Real Estate Services Section	15	0	15	Destroy/Offer Archives random samples.
		After settlement.			
66-14	Outdoor Advertising Control Operations – Real Estate Services Section	10	0	10	Offer to Archives
66-15	Outdoor Advertising Control – Permit Files – Real Estate Services Section	2	0	2	Offer to Archives
		After permit withdrawn.			
64-01	Paralegal Subject Files – Acquisitions Section	5	NA	5	Destroy
62-05	Plans and Maps – Design/Plans Section	P	NA	P	Paper: Permanent (admin. value) Microfilm: Permanent (Security Copy)
62-01	Program & Engineering Project Case Files – Plans Section (P&E Files; right-of-way appraisal and acquisition authorization, plan changes and correspondence)	1	2	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section to be filed in Acquisition Files, microfilmed.
62-06	Railroad Plat Maps – Design/Plans Section	1	P	P	Permanent (admin. value)
65-01	Railroads Project Files – Utilities Section	1*	2*	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section for Microfilm.

FILE INDEX — RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE
ALPHABETICAL BY RECORD SERIES DESIGNATION
Figure 11-1D

Record Series Number	Record Series Description	Retention Period (Years)			Disposition
		Office	Rec. Ctr.	Total	
65-04	Railroad Signal Agreement Files – Utilities Section	1*	2*	3*	Transfer to Real Estate Services Section for Microfilm and offer to Archives.
66-01	Real Property – Department Owned – Real Estate Services Section *Hardcopy kept 5 years, then filmed. **Microfilm kept 15 years after sale.	2 10	3 0	5* 10**	Destroy
60-02	Right-of-Way Administrative Files (Note: These are informational files.)	2	3	5	Destroy
60-01	Right-of-Way Correspondence/Subject Files (Operations) (Note: These are the true administrative records.)	2	3	5	Permanent; Offer to Archives
66-03	Statistical Data on Acquisitions – Real Estate Services Section	10	0	10	Offer to Archives.
62-02	Strip Maps – Design/Plans Section (Note: Copies only – originals in Planning & Statistics)	P	NA	P	Permanent (admin. value)
63-03	Subject Files (Operations) – Appraisal Section	10	NA	10	Destroy
62-04	Subject Files (Operations) – Design/Plans Section	1	NA	1	Offer to archives after review.
65-03	Subject Files (General) – Utilities Section	1	NA	1	Review yearly, remove superseded or updated material and offer to Archives.
66-08	Title VI Files – Real Estate Services Section	5	0	5	Destroy

FILE INDEX – RECORDS RETENTION SCHEDULE

ALPHABETICAL BY RECORD SERIES DESIGNATION

Figure 11-1D
(Continued)

1-2 MAIL ROUTING

1-2.1 File Identification

Mail routing depends on the proper use of Record Series references. To ensure easy identification for file location, the files for each Right of Way Section have an assigned Record Series number (reference code prefix).

1-2.2 Routing Stamp

At the time the mail clerk routes the incoming material for information or action, the appropriate block for filing will be checked on the routing stamp, as shown in Figure 11-2A.

Date Received					
Info	Act	File	R/W Bureau	Init	Comments
			60 Chief		
			61 Operations		
			62 Plans		
			63 Appraisal		
			64 Acquisition		
			65 Utilities		
			66 Real Estate		
			67 Special Programs		
			68 Access Management		
			Office Manager		
			Secretary		
File Due					

ROUTING SLIP

Figure 11-2A

1-2.2.1 Project-Related Items

Items marked for project-related files are sent to the Real Estate Services Section for filing or are re-routed to the Section housing the appropriate file. An exception occurs if the Section that possesses the proper project file also is shown in the routing for information or action. In this case, the Section possessing the proper project-related file should file the item, after ensuring all other indicated Sections have seen it or have received a copy of it.

1-2.2.2 Non-Project Items

All non-project-related material (subject-general) is routed for filing to the Section as shown in the Right-of-Way master file index housing the file on the subject. The mail clerk routes items that relate to subjects not shown in the file index to the Real Estate Services Section. That Section decides on the appropriate file for the item.

1-2.2.3 File Due Dates

In addition to marking the proper boxes for information, action and filing, the mail clerk affixes a file due date in the designated area at the bottom of the stamp. The file due date will be 1 week from the incoming date, which is shown at the top of the stamp. The material must reach the file no later than the file due date. Each Section shown on the routing will be responsible to see that the document reaches the file before the due date.

There will be times when the due date is approaching, and the action has not been completed. When this happens, the original document is sent to the file and a copy of the document is retained and marked as a "working copy" to show that the original has been sent for filing. This avoids confusion between the copy and the original.

1-2.3 **Routing Rules**

There are several important records management rules governing the mail routing of documents:

1. Never keep the original file copy of a document past the file due date.
2. Never place the original file copy of a document in a working file.
3. Return all improperly routed correspondence to the mail clerk.
4. Before filing, check to ensure all Sections indicated on the routing stamp have initialed the box.
5. Direct all filing questions to the Real Estate Services Section Records Manager.

1-3 **RECORDS RETENTION AND DISPOSAL**

1-3.1 **Purpose**

Records retention and disposal procedures govern the identification and systematic disposal of obsolete, inactive records of the Right-of-Way Bureau. This Section describes the applicable policies and procedures established in accordance with the provisions of State laws and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) directives.

1-3.2 **Policy**

It is the policy of the Right-of-Way Bureau to follow the records retention and disposal guidelines contained in Chapter V of the ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***.

1-3.3 **Records Retention**

The Bureau establishes records retention periods for each Record Series. It is possible that conflicts may occur between State and Federal requirements. In the event of conflict, the longer retention period applies.

1-3.4 Retention Periods

The Montana Department of Administration (DOA) requires that agencies base all retention periods on the fiscal year in which the records were created. For example, applying the fiscal retention system to records that were created in FY 2001, with a required retention of 5 years, means that the records may be disposed of on July 1, 2006. This is calculated as follows:

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{FY 2001 ends June 30, 2001} \\ \hline \qquad \qquad \qquad +5 \\ \text{End of retention period is June 30, 2006} \end{array}$$

For those Record Series that a Right-of-Way Section may be filing on a calendar year basis, the retention period may be extended 6 months to accommodate an orderly disposition procedure. Records created in calendar year 2001 with a retention period of 5 years will be extended to 5 years, 6 months. Therefore, the end of the retention period will be June 30, 2007 and the records may be disposed of on July 1, 2007.

1. Project-Related Records. Project-related records will be retained for a minimum of 3 years after submission of the final voucher to the FHWA. The Bureau microfilms all project files and keeps paper copies of the following:
 - Right-of-Way Agreement;
 - other special contracts or signed agreements;
 - copies of deed, easements, and receipts from the Secretary of State;
 - mylar maps; and
 - historical documents (e.g., records that show an agency's origin, administrative development, and present organizational structure).
2. Non-Project-Related Records. The Bureau follows the procedures in General Schedule 8 (Non-record Material) of the ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***.

1-3.5 Records Disposal

When a file is completed, a project disposal date is established to facilitate timely disposal of the file. The State Records Committee must approve the disposition of obsolete public records, regardless of whether the action is disposal, destruction (if confidential) or transfer to others (if historically significant).

Form RW-5RM is used for the disposal of records that are listed in the general schedules of DOA's ***Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual*** and for each MDT office's retention schedule.

The Real Estate Services Section processes all Records Disposal Requests for the Right-of Way Bureau. To initiate a Records Disposal Request, the following information is submitted to the Section's Supervisor:

- Record Series number,
- Record Series designation,
- period covered by the records, and
- estimated cubic footage for each Record Series to be disposed of (1 letter-size drawer = 0.04 m³ (1.5 ft³), 1 legal-size drawer = 0.06 m³ (2.0 ft³)).

1-3.6 **Disposal of Working Files**

It is not necessary to submit a Records Disposal Request to dispose of working files because they do not contain original correspondence, documents, or other permanent file copies. Working files are used only for an individual's reference purposes and can be discarded when they no longer are useful. Working files should be reviewed and weeded at least once a year. Any notations made on a "working copy" of a document that may be of significance should be summarized in memorandum form to the record file.

1-4 REFERENCES

1. ***Montana Department of Administration Records Management Policies and Procedures Manual***, October 1991.