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# Records Center Operations



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# Records Center Operations

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**ARMA International**  
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# FOREWORD

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The text of this publication has been approved by the Standards Development Committee of ARMA International, an accredited standards developer. It was approved as a technical report by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) on November 26, 2002. A technical report is not an American national standard, and the material contained herein is not normative in nature.

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Comments on the content of this publication should be sent to ARMA International, Director of Professional Resources, 13725 W. 109th Street, Suite 101, Lenexa, KS 66215.



## 1 Introduction

**1.1 Scope.** This document covers the establishment and operation of a records center either under direct control of an organization or through the use of a commercial records center. Recommendations include facility selection, shelving and equipment, protection and security requirements, operational methodologies, and budget considerations. These recommendations need to be taken into consideration along with the organization's provincial, governmental, or municipal permit requirements to ensure that all regional issues are covered.

This document focuses primarily on paper storage. However, specialized vault storage, which includes some requirements for special media, is also discussed. The sections on records center operations, commercial records centers, and records management budgetary considerations may also be used as guidelines for establishing specialized media control centers.

This document also does not directly address the needs of an archival records center. Establishing and operating an archival records center requires a more stringent look at temperature/humidity controls, storage supplies, and equipment for permanent storage of records and/or objects.

**1.2 Purpose.** The purpose of this technical report is to provide recommended guidelines for establishing and operating a records center. A records center is "a low-cost centralized area for housing and servicing inactive or semi-active records whose reference rate does not warrant their retention in a prime office space." A records center may occupy an independent building, or a portion of a building, depending on the need of the organization.

The need to store information to meet its administrative, operational, legal, and historical values, regardless of media is an essential part of any well-organized records management program. Records center operations should be a part of an overall records management program, and storage requirements should be based on records analysis and appraisal. Although paper and microfilm have been the major information storage media in the past, today's records centers must be able to accommodate electronic information storage as well. The advantages of a records center are becoming more meaningful with prime office space decreasing in availability, and the space costs increasing. A records manager's responsibility is to decide which records need to be maintained and the most cost-effective methods to house and manage them.

Maintenance of a records center provides organizations with the following benefits:

- Economy
  - Less costly storage space is used for inactive and semiactive records, allowing prime office space to be reallocated for more productive purposes
  - Less costly storage equipment, such as steel shelving and standard-size boxes, are used instead of expensive filing cabinets
- Accessibility/Accountability
  - Organization and identification required to transfer records enhance control
  - A well-organized records center provides accurate and efficient retrieval
- Security
  - Confidentiality is enhanced by controlled monitoring and access

**1.3 Equivalency.** Nothing in this standard is intended to preclude the application of new methods, technologies, or techniques for the protection of information.

## 2 Normative References

The following standards contain provisions that, through reference in the text, constitute provisions of this technical report. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All standards are subject to revision, and parties to agreements based on this technical report are encouraged to consider the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the standards indicated below. References are made to United States standards-setting authorities. Readers outside the United States may benefit by researching the requirements of similar standards authorities within their countries.

*ARMA Glossary of Records and Information Management Terms, 2nd Edition (ANSI/ARMA 10-1999), 2000*

*NFPA 12A Standard on Halon 1301 Fire Extinguishing Systems, 1997*

*NFPA 13 Standard for the Installation of Sprinkler Systems, 1999*

*NFPA 220 Standard on Types of Building Construction, 1999*

*NFPA 232 Standard for the Protection of Records, 2000 Edition*