

State Records Authority NSW

Functional Retention and Disposal Authority: FA445

This authority covers records documenting the function of
fire & emergency management

This retention and disposal authority is approved under section 21(2)c of the *State Records Act 1998* following prior approval by the Board of the State Records NSW in accordance with section 21(3) of the Act.

State Records Authority NSW
Functional Retention and Disposal Authority

Authority no FA445

SR file no SR2024/31

Scope This retention and disposal authority covers records documenting the function of fire and emergency management.

Public office Rural Fire Service

Approval date 12 July 2024

About the Functional Retention and Disposal Authority

Purpose of the authority

The purpose of this retention and disposal authority is to identify those records created and maintained by NSW public offices which are required as State archives and to provide approval for the destruction of certain other records created and maintained by NSW public offices, after minimum retention periods have been met.

The approval for disposal given by this authority is given under the provisions of the *State Records Act 1998* only and does not override any other obligations of an organisation to retain records.

The retention and disposal of State records

The records retention and disposal practices outlined in this authority are approved under section 21(2)(c) of the *State Records Act 1998 (NSW)*. Part 3 (Protection of State Records) of the Act provides that records are not to be disposed of without the consent of the State Records Authority NSW (State Records NSW) with certain defined exceptions. These exceptions include an action of disposal which is positively required by law, or which takes place in accordance with a normal administrative practice (NAP) of which State Records NSW does not disapprove. Advice on the State Records Act can be obtained from State Records NSW.

The authority sets out how long the different classes of records generated by an organisation must be kept to meet its legal, operational and other requirements, and whether the records are to be kept as State archives. State Records NSW reviews and approves organisations' retention and disposal authorities under the *State Records Act*. It is the duty of a public office, in submitting a draft retention and disposal authority for approval, to disclose to State Records NSW any information which affects the retention of the records covered by the authority.

State Records NSW's decisions take into account both the administrative requirements of public offices in discharging their functional responsibilities and the potential research use of the records by the NSW Government and the public. One of State Records NSW's functions is to identify and preserve records as State archives. These are records which document the authority and functions of Government, its decision-making processes and the implementation and outcomes of those decisions, including the nature of their influence and effect on communities and individual lives. Criteria for the identification of State archives are listed in *Building the Archives: Policy on records appraisal and the identification of State archives*. The Policy also explains the roles and responsibilities of State Records NSW and of public offices in undertaking appraisal processes and disposal activities.

Implementing the authority

This retention and disposal authority covers records controlled by the public office and applies only to the records or classes of records described in the authority. The authority should be implemented as part of the records management program of the organisation. Two primary objectives of this program are to ensure that records are kept for as long as they are of value to the organisation and its stakeholders and to enable the destruction or other disposal of records once they are no longer required for business or operational purposes.

The implementation process entails use of the authority to sentence records. Sentencing is the examination of records in order to identify the disposal class in the authority to

which they belong. This process enables the organisation to determine the appropriate retention period and disposal action for the records. For further advice see *Implementing a retention and disposal authority*.

Where the format of records has changed (for example, from paper-based to electronic) this does not prevent the disposal decisions in the authority from being applied to records which perform the same function. The information contained in non paper-based or technology dependant records must be accessible for the periods prescribed in the classes. Where a record is copied, either onto microform or digitally imaged, the original should not be disposed of without authorisation (see the *General Retention and Disposal Authority – Original or source records that have been copied*). Public offices will need to ensure that any software, hardware or documentation required to gain continuing access to technology dependent records is available for the periods prescribed.

Disposal action

Records required as State archives

Records which are to be retained as State archives are identified with the disposal action 'Required as State archives'. Records that are identified as being required as State archives should be stored in controlled environmental conditions and control of these records should be transferred to Museums of History NSW when they are no longer in use for official purposes.

The transfer of control of records as State archives may, or may not, involve a change in custodial arrangements. Records can continue to be managed by the public office under a distributed management agreement. Public offices are encouraged to make arrangements with Museums of History NSW regarding the management of State archives.

Transferring records identified as State archives and no longer in use for official purposes to Museums of History NSW should be a routine and systematic part of a public office's records management program.

Records approved for destruction

Records that have been identified as being approved for destruction may only be destroyed once a public office has ensured that all other requirements for retaining the records are met. Retention periods set down in this authority are *minimum* periods only and a public office should keep records for a longer period if necessary. Reasons for longer retention can include legal requirements, administrative need, government directives and changing social or community expectations. A public office **must not** dispose of any records where the public office is aware of possible legal action (including legal discovery, court cases, formal applications for access) where the records may be required as evidence.

Once all requirements for retention have been met, destruction of records should be carried out in a secure and environmentally sound way. Relevant details of the destruction should be recorded. See *Destruction of records: a practical guide*.

Organisations should review functional retention and disposal authorities regularly to ensure that they remain relevant as the organisation's functions and activities, operating environment and requirements for records change. Retention requirements may change over time. This can occur when:

- business needs or practices change

- new laws, regulations or standards are introduced
- new technology is implemented
- government administration is restructured and functions are moved between entities, or
- unforeseen or new community expectations become apparent.

State Records NSW recommends that organisations check any functional retention and disposal authorities more than 5 years old to ensure that the retention periods and disposal actions remain relevant.

Regardless of whether a record has been approved for destruction or is required as a State archive, a public office or an officer of a public office **must not** permanently transfer possession or ownership of a State record to any person or organisation without the explicit approval of State Records NSW.

Administrative change

This retention and disposal authority has been designed to link records to the functions they document rather than to organisational structure. This provides for a stable retention and disposal authority that is less affected by administrative change. The movement of specified functions between branches or units within the public office does not require the authority to be resubmitted to State Records NSW for approval. However, when functions move from one public office to another the public office that inherits the new function should contact State Records NSW to discuss use of any existing retention and disposal authority approved for use by a predecessor organisation.

Amendment and review of this authority

State Records NSW must approve any amendment to this authority. Public offices that use the authority should advise State Records NSW of any proposed changes or amendments to the authority.

State Records NSW recommends a review of this authority after five years to establish whether its provisions are still appropriate. Either the public office or State Records NSW may propose a review of the authority at any other time, particularly in the case of change of administrative arrangements, procedures or to operating environments which are likely to affect the value of the records covered by this authority.

In all cases the process of review will involve consultation between State Records NSW and the public office. If the process of review reveals that this authority requires amendment, the necessary amendments should be made and approved.

Contact Information

State Records Authority NSW
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Kingswood NSW 2747
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Functional Retention and Disposal Authority Fire and emergency management

Authority number: FA445

Dates of coverage: Open

List of Functions and Activities covered

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1.0.0 RURAL FIRE SERVICE

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **GOVERNMENT RELATIONS - Advice** for records relating to the provision of advice to the portfolio Minister or other government organisations concerning the organisation's policies and procedures, functions, obligations, legislation or liabilities.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **PROPERTY MANAGEMENT - Leasing-out** for records relating to requests to film on or use the organisation's property or equipment

1.1.0 Brigade administration

The activity of managing rural fire brigades.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Celebrations, ceremonies, functions** for records relating to fundraising events.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT - Accounting** for records relating to the managements of money raised from fundraising.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **PERSONNEL - Employee service history** for summary records of brigade members.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Compliance** for records relating to authorisations for fundraising activities by Brigades.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Procedures** for records relating to procedures for the management of fire brigades.

1.1.1	Key records of brigade administration processes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • summary records of brigade members: name, contact details and status of the member (active or non-active) • the establishment and disbandment of brigades, e.g. notices of establishment and disbandment and appeals. 	Required as State archives
1.1.2	Volunteers' service files including competencies achieved to support their role in providing emergency services.	Retain minimum of 75 years after date of birth or minimum of 7 years after

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Brigade administration

		action completed, whichever is longer, then destroy
1.1.3	Records documenting the administration, maintenance and coordination of a brigade including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• attendance of a member at a brigade• the registration of authorised fire investigation officers• assignment of members to trucks and the deployment of trucks• brigade sign-on books and cards documenting truck details, vehicle identification numbers and crew details• vehicle log sheets recording every time a vehicle leaves a brigade station• the development, review and approval of brigade rules and constitutions.	Retain minimum of 25 years after action completed, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Emergency data modelling

1.2.0 Emergency data modelling

The activity of managing the collection and analysis of data for fire mitigation and emergency management. Includes mapping and modelling of the data.

1.2.1	Records relating to the analysis, collection and manipulation of data, and compilation of reports, during and after a bush fire. Includes data on resident behaviour, construction standards, structure types and number of losses. Records include surveys, photographs and video and reports (such as Bush Fire Impact Analysis reports) prepared using the data with additional information on bush fire and risk mitigation activities.	Required as State archives
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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Emergency fleet and equipment

1.3.0 Emergency fleet and equipment

The activity of managing emergency vehicles and specialised equipment, including protective clothing.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Celebrations, ceremonies, functions** for records relating to authorisations and attendance of vehicles for non emergency use such as school fairs and agricultural shows.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Policy** for records relating to the development and review of policies for the management and use of fire fighting equipment.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Procedures** for records relating to the development and review of procedures for the management and use of fire fighting equipment.

1.3.1	Records relating to the design, manufacture and testing of specialised fire and emergency vehicles and equipment, clothing and accessories that are unique to the organisation. Includes the markings on vehicles and design of uniforms and accessories.	Required as State archives
1.3.2	Records relating to the coordination and maintenance of emergency fleet and equipment. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allocation of equipment to employees, volunteers, or units • oversight of the manufacture of vehicles, equipment, and gear • specifications for equipment that do not proceed • determination of requirements and future requirements for equipment • testing of equipment and gear e.g., testing criteria, schedules, and results. 	Retain minimum of 10 years after action completed, then destroy
1.3.3	Records relating to the process of ensuring that aircraft operators comply with the organisation's standards and requirements. Records include expressions of interest, air operator certificates, medical certificates, logs, insurance papers and correspondence with non-compliant operators. Also includes summary records of approved operators, pilots, and companies.	Retain minimum of 10 years after superseded, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Land use planning

1.4.0 Land use planning

The function of improving the safety of the community and buildings in bush fire prone areas through planning, design, and construction standards.

1.4.1	Records relating to the approval of certified bush fire prone land maps. Includes correspondence with councils, certified maps, and validation records.	Required as State archives
1.4.2	Records relating to the development of bush fire prone land maps. Records include working papers, compilation of geographic data, etc.	Retain minimum of 7 years after action completed, then destroy
1.4.3	Records relating to the assessment of development applications and planning instruments referred to the organisation by local authorities and other government agencies, including applications to develop in bush fire prone areas e.g., 'Bush Fire Safety Authority'. Records include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • advice • supporting documentation and calculations • determination • summary records of consent and conditions imposed. 	Retain minimum of 50 years after action completed, then destroy
1.4.4	Records relating to refused or withdrawn 'Bush Fire Safety Authority' consents.	Retain minimum of 7 years after action completed, then destroy
1.4.5	Records relating to general advice to and from local authorities and other government agencies on development control, assessments and planning instruments.	Retain minimum of 7 years after action completed, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Mitigation, prevention and preparedness

1.5.0 Mitigation, prevention and preparedness

The activity of minimising the impact of emergency situations on the community. Includes developing and implementing strategies of mitigation, prevention, preparedness, and risk reduction.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **COMMUNITY RELATIONS - Enquiries** for records relating to routine enquiries from the public relating to mitigation, prevention and preparation.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **PROPERTY MANAGEMENT - Construction** for records relating to designing and constructing emergency management structures.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Policy** for records relating to the development and review of emergency management policies.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Higher & further education and research* **RESEARCH MANAGEMENT** for records relating to the management of research projects into bush fire mitigation.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Planning** for records relating to the development of emergency management plans including Bush Fire Risk Management Plans , NSW State Bush Fire Plan

1.5.1	<p>Key records relating to mitigation, prevention and preparedness for emergency events. Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • technical and specialist advice, e.g. briefing notes and minutes, correspondence, position papers, reports etc. • final reports on the management of bush fire mitigation activities including reports on the impact of individual fires, mitigation activities and fire permits issued • final plans including emergency management and response plans, Bush Fire Risk Management Plans and the NSW State Bush Fire plan • registers of certified fire trails • community safety and awareness programs and campaigns e.g. media releases, submissions and discussion papers, program plans, final versions of materials for community education workshops and school programs. 	Required as State archives
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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Mitigation, prevention and preparedness

1.5.2	Records relating to development and delivery of local materials for community education workshops and school programs. Records include programs, lists of attendees, handouts, information packs, pamphlets etc.	Retain minimum of 7 years after action completed, then destroy
1.5.3	<p>Records relating to operational mitigation, prevention and risk reduction activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • plans for operational capabilities and readiness • permits, certificates, authorisations, variations and consents for lighting of fires, back burning, hazard reduction, fireworks etc • complaints and enquiries about fire hazard or mitigation works • notices and related appeals or objections • declarations of prohibited burning times, fire bans and emergency periods • registers of neighbourhood safer places • routine advice • penalty notices • safety guidelines for hazard reduction • development and maintenance of fire trails and signage • hazard reduction works including where owners fail to comply with a notice etc. <p>Includes provision of support services at large scale events e.g., World Youth Day and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meetings.</p>	Retain minimum of 10 years after action completed, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Response and investigation

1.6.0 Response and investigation

The activity of responding to emergency situations and incidents. Includes incident investigations.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Joint ventures** for records relating to agreements with other organisations.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Policy** for records relating to the development and review of policies for bush fire mitigation.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Administrative records* **STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT - Procedures** for records relating to the development and review of procedures for bush fire mitigation.

1.6.1	<p>Records relating to the management of and response to emergency events:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • involving areas declared as State emergencies or natural disasters • involving loss of life or extensive damage to multiple properties • that lead to changes to strategic policies or procedures for dealing with emergencies. <p>Records include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • warnings and declarations • briefings and debriefings • photographs, recorded footage etc. • investigation reports and supporting documents • final incident reports produced by incident controller. 	Required as State archives
1.6.2	<p>Records relating to the management of and response to routine emergency events that do not involve the declaration of a State emergency or natural disaster, or where there is no loss of life or extensive property damage. Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delegation of responsibilities to authorised officers and officers or brigade members 	Retain minimum of 12 years after action completed, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Response and investigation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • dissemination of total fire ban declarations, fire warnings etc. • logistics and works requests and deployment • search warrants • warnings and declarations • directions to undertake works • briefing, incident, situation, evacuation, injury, loss etc. reports • communication logs e.g., radio, calls etc. • accidents to service vehicles • details of works carried out and assistance rendered • local recording of events, incidents, and occurrences during an investigation • debriefings • daily confirmations of aircraft availability and tasking of aircraft. 	
1.6.3	Final reports of all fire investigations and summary reports of fire investigation activities, including the number and type of fires investigated, cause and origin.	Required as State archives
1.6.4	Records relating to the issue of penalty notices.	Retain minimum of 7 years after action completed, then destroy
1.6.5	Records relating to administrative arrangements for transport, fuel, catering, and accommodation during an incident. Includes the establishment of temporary base support camps.	Retain minimum of 2 years after action completed, then destroy
1.6.6	Register of properties with a water supply that can be used for firefighting purposes, e.g., dams, creeks, or swimming pools. The register identifies the property and volumes available.	Retain until superseded, then destroy

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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Standards

1.7.0 Standards

The activities associated with developing and establishing decisions, directions, precedents, and standard methods of operation to carry out a function or process.

1.7.1	Records relating to the development and review of standards and protocols relating to managing and responding to emergency situations. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• management and use of fleet and equipment• investigation and incident response• mitigation, prevention, and preparedness• land assessment for bush fire prone areas.• brigade management	Required as State archives
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RURAL FIRE SERVICE - Training and development

1.8.0 Training and development

The function of developing and delivering emergency services training for internal and external clients.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Higher and further education* **COURSE DELIVERY** for records relating to the development and delivery of classroom materials.

See General Retention and Disposal Authority *Higher and further education* **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT & APPROVAL** for records relating to the development and approval of specialised curriculum for fire fighting, fire and emergency management.

1.8.1	Assessment records for personnel, volunteers, and external clients. Includes examination results and certifications.	Retain minimum of 30 years after action completed, then destroy
1.8.2	<p>Records relating to emergency training exercises including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major exercises and programs that develop capability including joint exercises with other agencies e.g., SES, Fire and Rescue, Police etc. • Inter-agency competitions and championships. <p>Records include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • program of events, • publicity, • invitations to participate, • staffing arrangements, • use and supply of equipment, and • handbooks. 	Retain minimum of 10 years after action completed, then destroy