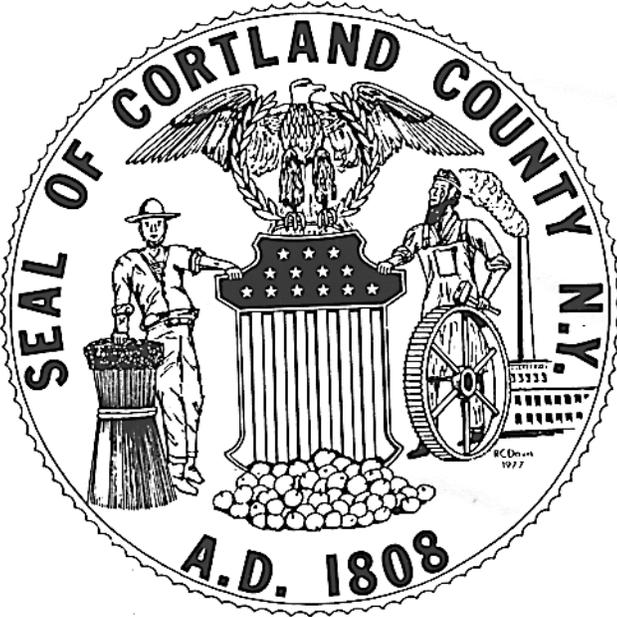


Cortland County's Records Management Policies and Procedures



Adopted: 10/23/08
Revised: 2018

I – Introduction

I.1 *Purpose of this Records Management Manual*

The purpose of this manual is to provide records management policies and procedures for Cortland County. This manual outlines the records management services provided to departments through the County Clerk’s Office General Guidelines for departmental records management are also included. This policy will be made available to all departments and their employees on the County’s website under “Employee Policies/Forms/Directory””

This policy has been approved by the Cortland County Records Advisory Board, and adopted by the Cortland County Legislature and serves as the legally adopted County Records Management Policy.

I.2 *What is Records Management?*

Records management, in formal terms, is the systematic creation, organization, maintenance, use and periodic legal disposition of records. Properly managing the flow of records cuts costs, while increasing government efficiency.

It is also important to manage these records because they are public documents. Public records protect the interests and rights of the Cortland County taxpayers. A strong records management program:

- A. Provides a clear legal basis for actions pertaining to records and a clear definition of who is responsible for the varying aspects of the record management program.
- B. Prevents the creation of unnecessary records, thus saving space, time and money
- C. Provides for retention of archival records for historical and research purposes
- D. Provides information quickly and easily when needed internally or by the general public
- E. Provides guidance for the proper disposal of county records.

I.3 *Cortland County Records Advisory Board*

The Cortland County Records Advisory Board was established by Resolution #153-97 and amended by Resolution #273-08 by the Cortland County Legislature. This Advisory Board will make recommendations, additions, corrections or other changes to this manual, as well as performing other records management duties required or requested by the Legislature. This manual will be reviewed on an annual basis.

I.4 *Records Management Program Responsibility*

The Cortland County Clerk serves as the County Records Management Officer, as appointed by Resolution #217-89. The County RMO, hereafter referred to as RMO, will act as a records consultant to Department Heads, who are ultimately responsible for the records in their respective offices.

The Cortland County RMO oversees the management of county records for retention, disposition and storage. The RMO serves as an advisor for the management of records in all county departments.

I.5 *Records Access*

Each department will assign a Records Access Officer (RAO). This person will be responsible for maintaining the records management program for that office. In addition to regular records management policies and procedures, each RAO will:

- A. Provide the RMO with a list of records routinely created, retained and stored by that department.
- B. Work with the department head, county attorney and Clerk of the Legislature to fulfill any Freedom of Information (FOIL) requests from the public.
- C. Work with the ROM and staff to ensure smooth and documented transfer of records to and from the Cortland Records Center.
- D. Work with other departments to determine and designate official records, and duplicate copies.

II – Creation and ownership of records

II.1 *Definition of “Official Copy”*

Each records series in the county is either:

- A. The official copy (sometimes called the record copy) that needs to be retained for the required and determined retention period, or
- B. A duplicate copy that may be destroyed whenever the office no longer needs the record

II.2 *Designation of Records as Official Copies*

It is important that each record series in the county be designated as an official copy or a duplicate copy. The RAO of each department must know what records are the official records, and what are duplicate copies. The county will use the following criteria to determine the Official or Record Copy:

- A. Any record officially filed with the county clerk will be the official copy for that record.
- B. Any unique copy of a record will be the official copy.
- C. In any other cases, the original copy will always serve as the official copy.

II.3 *Custody of Records*

All departments and staff must understand that the records they use in their daily work are not their personal records. The records belong to Cortland County, maintained by the department for the benefit of the public.

All active records of Cortland County will be governed by the department that originally created the records. Active records should be safely stored within the department responsible for them.

All inactive records that have a retention period of six years or more may be sent and stored at the Cortland Records Center. Legal custody of these records remains with the County and the department that sent them.

Court Records are officially records of New York State, under the oversight of the Unified Court System and the County Clerk's Office. **See section III.4 of this policy.**

II.4 *Retention of Records*

Cortland County has adopted the New York State CO-2 Records Retention and Disposition Schedule (revised 2006). Every department should have a copy of this schedule for reference. If your office does not have one, contact the County Clerk.

If you feel that certain records in your department must follow a different retention schedule, please contact the County Clerk to determine the appropriate schedule and retention period.

II.5 *Microfilm as Official Copy*

The County may legally make microfilm copies of any permanent county records and replace the original with this copy. If the County has replaced paper records with a microfilm copy, the microfilm will serve as the official record.

Once microfilm has been created and verified, upon approval by the RMO and County Historian, departments are encouraged to dispose of paper copies, thus eliminating duplicate copies.

Prior to disposition, microfilm must be verified to ascertain that all paper records have been properly duplicated on the microfilm. Only permanent or archival records should be microfilmed. (*See more microfilm guidelines in section V of this policy*)

II.6 *Litigation Support*

Litigation support includes all those activities that protect the interests of the county and its citizens in legal disputes. This section explains the county's procedure for managing records and the steps to take in relation to litigation.

In all cases where a lawsuit has been brought against the county, officials must immediately contact the county attorney's office, as well as the county administrator's office. No other action should be taken before consulting with these two offices for advice.

The county attorney or the county administrator will contact the Clerk of the Legislature, the department head, or the RMO to provide the record in question.

III – Retention and Disposition of Records

III.1 *Retention Schedules*

Cortland County has officially adopted the New York State Archives' Records Retention and Disposition Schedule, (CO-2, revised 2006). Each department should have a copy of this schedule. If you do not, contact the RMO.

For court records the county will adhere to the retention and disposition requirements developed by the Unified Court system, and administered by the courts and the RMO.

A department, upon approval of the RMO, may extend the minimum retention periods for a certain record series.

III.2 *Exceptions to General Retention Rules*

In some situations, the regular rules concerning retention of records do not apply. Departments must keep in mind the following exceptions:

- A. Records created before 1910 cannot be disposed of without authorization from the New York State Archives.
- B. During legal proceedings, the county must retain the corresponding records, even if their retention has passed. This includes FOIL requests, subpoenas notices of claim and more. These records must be retained until all litigation is resolved.

- C. .
- D. If the record is not covered in the CO-2 schedule, the county must retain the records until a retention period has been established by the NYS Archives.

III.3 *Records Disposition*

Every department that disposes of records must document the record series, the signature of the department head, the date the record covers, the appropriate section of the Records Retention Schedule and the date of the disposition. These steps will ensure:

- A. The department head has approved the disposition
- B. The documentation of disposition for future research or litigation
- C. Proof that the records were actually disposed of in accordance with records retention requirements

Proper Records Disposition Sheets may be found on the county website under “Employee Policies/Forms/Directory, or by contacting the RMO.

When the legal minimum retention period has expired, the Records Access Officer for that department, , will complete the Records Disposition Form. The RMO, staff or designee will oversee the proper destruction of the records.

Cortland County will make every attempt to see that all obsolete records are disposed of through recycling. However, prior to recycling, the county will cross-cut or confetti shred all confidential records. This shredding must be documented and witnessed by the Records Access Officer, the RMO or staff.

III.4 *Disposition of Court Records*

All court records will be retained and disposed of in accordance with the Records Retention and Disposition Schedules established by the New York State Office of Court Administration. Prior to destruction or disposal, permission must be requested and granted by the OCA Office of Records Management.

Court records include the individual files and all financial records maintained by court clerks.

Disposition schedules as well as disposition request forms may be accessed and printed from the Office of Records Management web page at www.nycourts.gov/admin/recordsmanagement

III.5 *Appraisal for Archival and Historic Records*

Cortland County may decide to keep permanently records that have a minimum retention period, but have historical value. In such circumstances, the department head will coordinate an appraisal of these records with the County Historian.

Once found to have historic or archival value, all permanent records will be housed at the Cortland Records Center.

IV – Storage of Records

IV.1 *Storage supplies and equipment*

All records must be kept in a cool, dry environment to ensure their safety. Cortland County records should be stored in double-walled, cubic-foot records storage boxes measuring 10 inches by 12 inches by 15 inches. These boxes are available at the County Clerk's office and at the Cortland Records Center. If a department wishes to order their own boxes, they must fit the above requirements.

Boxes should be stored at least three inches off the floor to allow for protection of water or flood damage.

A shelving unit can provide for maximum storage space; however boxes should not be stacked more than two high on a shelf, or any other surface.

Large records such as maps or blueprints can be stored in Map cabinets.

Because of the various types and uses for microfilm, the county will decide upon proper storage equipment and cabinets for microfilm, upon approval of the RMO.

IV.2 *Map Storage*

Maps should be stored either:

- A. Flat in cabinets with drawers 2 inches deep and capable of holding maps or plans measuring 30 inches by 42 inches, or
- B. Hung vertically enclosed in vinyl sleeves in cabinets designed exclusively for this purpose.
- C. Scanned and digitized and backed up securely
 - 1. All maps will be maintained in a TIFF format
 - 2. Minimal Optical resolution is 300

3. Backups of digital maps must meet Cortland County Information Technology requirements

A paper copy of all maps recorded at the county clerk's office will be forwarded to the Real Property Tax Office.

IV.3 *The Cortland Records Center*

The Cortland Records Center, located at 35 Port Watson Street, Cortland, NY or any other facility subsequently identified by the county, houses active, inactive and archival records for county, town and city departments. All records transferred, housed or removed from the records center follow the Records Center Procedure Manual (see Appendix A).

There is limited access allowed to the Cortland Records Center. The exterior of the office is accessible to the RMO, staff, and County Coroners, as well as city buildings and grounds and maintenance crews.

The rear half of the building is the records room and has restricted access. Only the RMO and staff are allowed access through a magnetic security key. The temperature controlled room houses all records, with a sprinkler system that shall be tested annually.

In the event of any kind of damage to hard copy records, restoration of the records will be in accordance with the Disaster Preparedness and Recovery Plan for Records. (See Appendix B)

V-Paper/Hard Copy Records

Vital Records

Each department must designate certain cabinets that are vital records needed for the operation of the department. These cabinets will be marked to identify them as holding records that should be given recovery attention immediately. Locations of these cabinets will be described in the Disaster Response and Continuity of Operations Plan. Staff in each department should get in the habit of placing in these file cabinets any work product on their desk at the close of the workday that would be deemed vital to the operation of their department.

To determine what records are essential records, each department should ask the following questions:

- How important are the records to the County?
- Are there duplicate copies of the records elsewhere?

- Can the records be replaced and how much will the cost be to replace or recreate the record?
- Would the cost of replacement be less than restoration costs?

To simplify this process, priorities may be assigned as follows:

- **Critical**-recover at all costs. These records are historically valuable or records that are important to county operations and very difficult to recreate.
- **Important**-recover if time and resources permit. These are records that are not critical to the resumption of county business, but are considered important and may be somewhat easier to recreate.
- **Dispose** of as part of cleanup. These records do not need to be salvaged because they are convenience copies and the official copy is at another non-damaged location.

Emergency Kits

Each department should be encouraged to assemble a kit with items needed specifically for the operation of their office.

In addition, two generic kits should be assembled. One should be stored at the Records Center and one at the County Office Building on the third floor with items that might be needed in recovery efforts.

Each kit should include:

Item	Comments
Batteries	AA
Paint Brushes	To brush dry mold from documents and equipment
Blotting paper	To dry documents, maps, photographs, and paintings
Box cutters	To open cardboard containers/map cylinders, etc.
Chemical light sticks	High intensity sticks provide light for about 30 minutes; the low intensity, six to twelve hours. The low intensity sticks are not bright enough to work by, but they can be used to mark aisles, etc.
Chemical sponges	Chemically treated foam rubber to remove soot, dirt or mold from books, walls, fabrics, etc.
Clip boards and writing pads	
Clothesline	To secure vinyl tarps
Crates	To temporarily store water damaged files

Duct tape	
Dust masks	
Fans	
Extension cords (heavy-duty)	
First aid kit	
Flashlights and headlamps	Headlamps leave both hands free and their light always falls where the wearer is looking
Freezer / wax paper	To separate wet books when they are packed to send to freezer storage
Garden hose	To divert water – can be used with vinyl tarps
Masking tape	
Newsprint, unprinted	
Netting (Plastic)	
Non-Woven Polyester Web (e.g. Hollytex or Remy)	To interleave flat items and books whenever wet items are likely to stick to newsprint, blotters or each other
Paper clips (non-rust)	
Paper towels (not colored)	
Pencils, Pencil Sharpener, Pens	
Plastic aprons Large Plastic Bins	Shipping of microfilm, document rinsing
Plastic sheeting	To protect records from overhead water leaks. Polyethylene 3 to 5 mils thick
Plastic trash bags Plexi Glass Sheets	For support when rinsing soiled documents
Protective eyewear	
Rescubes	One-piece folding boxes made of corrugated polyethylene for packaging items to be sent to freeze-drying facilities
Rubber boots and gloves Scissors Screens	Multiple pairs, in different sizes to fit different staff members To cut blotting paper, rope, etc. For drying documents
Step ladder	

Toolkit	Screwdrivers (slot, Phillips 1, 2, 3), hammer, crescent wrench, basic socket set and driver, knife-type cutter & blades, scissors
Trays 2-6 inches deep	Used to rinse soiled documents
Two-way radios (battery powered)	
Vinyl tarps with metal grommets (3' x 6', 6' x 6')	To suspend over records, electronic equipment, etc. as a water diverter.
Wiping cloths	
Waterproof markers & pens	
Work gloves	Multiple pairs, in different sizes to fit different staff members
The above items should be stored in large plastic bins with lids.	

VI- Digital Records

In an ideal world, all the county's records would be digitized, all programs on county computers would be backed up by the county's servers and only digital records would be produced, not paper records.

Although, this cannot be accomplished tomorrow we can work towards this goal. While digitization of records is the optimal method for preservation and retrieval, each image must be verified before the paper is destroyed. An even better option is to produce the record digitally and never create a paper record.

All records converted from paper to digital images must be retained in a TIFF or PDF A format. Digital records must be scanned at a minimum of 300 DPI. Digital records must be backed up on at least two servers. One server must be at an off-site location.

Upon completion of scanning the digital image should be compared to the hard copy image to verify that the image is a mirror copy of the original document.

Once scanned records are digitized properly, backed up properly and verified, the digital record can be declared the "Record Copy" and the hard copy record can be destroyed.

VII – Microfilm Guidelines

While microfilm may be considered an outdated method of preserving records, it is still recommended by the NYS Archives as a source of preservation. If the microfilm is to be used as the only image of the record, a usable copy must be created either as a Diazo copy of microfilm, a compact disc or a thumb drive.

VII.1 Only records that have a permanent retention status or have been designated as archival records should be preserved on microfilm.

To prepare records for microfilm:

- A. Check the file to be sure all records meet the above criteria
- B. Remove all staples, paper clips and fasteners
- C. Discard duplicate records
- D. Place records exactly as you would like them filmed
- E. Number the bottom of each page to be filmed

All microfilm will be done by a vendor approved by the Cortland County Records Advisory Board.

A receipt for all documents being transported from the county for the purpose of microfilming must be prepared by the department. The receipt must be signed by the department head and the vendor and a copy sent to the County Clerk/RMO. When the records have been returned, the department head will verify that that the records have been received and send a signed receipt to the County Clerk/RMO.

Prior to destruction, all records must be verified to insure that all images are clear and that all images have been filmed.

Vendors will produce images on a compact disc for retrieval and silver microfilm.

Silver microfilm will be stored at the Cortland County Record's Center. Only previously produced Diazo microfilm and CDs will be used to retrieve images.

VII.2 Microfilming Court Records.

When preparing court files for microfilming, the clerk will follow the procedures below:

- A. Pull each file and compare to index book for documents filed (Must remain in same order as index book)

- B. Make a note of missing or found documents with red pen in index book.
- C. If a document is written in Index Book but is not in file, write up “Document Missing” and state which document, date in index book and file # on a an 8 ½ X 11sheet of paper.
- D. Keep a log of each file that has been prepped
- E. Duplicate records may be disposed of
- F. Unnecessary documents may be disposed of (if unsure ask clerk or deputy clerk)
- G. Remove all paper clips and staples
- H. Number center, bottom of pages with pencil, number each image to be filmed, one box-one consecutive number list (be sure to check back of documents for images) If any image is missed – Insert paper stating that “Image #_ is numbering Error” Duplicate numbers written?- number 3, 3A
- I. Blank forms do not have to be filmed, put a red X across this type of page
- J. Separate into two boxes as you go (Sealed and Unsealed)
- K. When box is full, fill out identifying sheet with box number, file numbers, and number of images

VII.3 *Selecting and working with Vendors*

The New York State Archives provides a list of reputable and certified Microfilming vendors. Vendors will pick up records when the records are ready for filming. Vendor must have OCA approval to film sealed records.

Two copies of images should be provided, a permanent silver copy, and a CD or image copy. The silver roll of microfilm is sent to the Records Center for storage and preservation. The CD stays in-office for viewing use. All Microfilm must be verified to ensure accurate reproduction. Verification can be done by the clerk, or occasionally by a third party through the vendor.

If the microfilm is declared the “record copy”, , one roll of sealed records and one roll of unsealed records from each batch filmed, must be sent to OCA for quality control.

Appendix A

**PROCEDURE MANUAL
CORTLAND RECORD CENTER
(CRC)**

35 Port Watson Street, Cortland, NY 13045
607-758-5589 or County Clerk-607-753-5021
Email: recordscenter@cortland-co.org

1. TRANSFER OF RECORDS

Inactive and permanent records are transferred to the CRC with the approval of the agency/department head. Records transferred to the CRC remain the property of the agency/department sending them. Call before making arrangements to send records to ensure that there is available shelf space.

New York State law dictates the proper management of records, for which the department head is immediately responsible. Part of this management includes proper listing of records and placing NYS Archives retention schedule numbers on transfer and disposition sheets.

Only a department/agency head has the authority to place records in the CRC for storage. For security purposes, a signature card authorizing placement of records as well as requests and retrieval of records must be completed and signed and will remain on file at the CRC. Change of department/agency head requires that a new signature card be filled out. Please notify the CRC when there has been a change in staff that may affect your signature card.

Due to the high volume of health-related and confidential records held at the CRC, a HIPAA-compliant *Standards for Privacy* is in place at the facility, approved by the Cortland County Legislature in April 2003. Please call before faxing confidential requests.

Preparing Records for Transfer

Each department/agency is responsible for preparing and boxing their records for storage at the CRC as well as filling out appropriate paperwork. To transfer records, the following guidelines must be followed:

1. All records must be placed in standard (one cubic foot) record storage boxes. Make sure records are properly identified and documented according to standards found in New York State Archives Records Retention and Disposition Schedule CO-2 for county records and MU-1 for city records, both available on www.archives.nysed.gov). Records coming to the CRC without the proper paperwork filled out will be rejected and returned.
2. Remove file folders from hanging files. If files are in binders remove the documents from the binders and place the documents in manila file folders or bundle using rubber bands. Used manila file folders are available at the CRC.

3. Be proactive: remove duplicate copies of the documents and dispose of them. Also remove any type of outside publications, magazines, or manuals unless this type of document has been created specifically for or by the local government. Outside publications should be thrown in your trash ahead of time.
4. Records must be packed upright in the records storage boxes. Letter size documents can be stored in one direction, legal size in another. *Please do not over pack boxes*, as many of them must be lifted above staff's head onto shelving. If you can't comfortably lift the box, it's too heavy.
5. You may pack more than one type of record (record series) into a box; however, do not mix permanent records with inactive records. Only documents with the same retention should be placed in the same box.
6. Number each box consecutively; use a yellow sticky note or another piece of paper taped to outside of box.
Do not write on outside of box or cover, as for security reasons a blind boxing system is used.
7. A completed Records Transfer Sheet must accompany each box to be transferred to the Record Center. Record Center staff can email required forms. The form must include the following:
 - a. Department/Agency Name
 - b. Transfer Date (when shipped to the CRC).
 - c. Name of Record Series
 - d. NYS Archives Retention Schedule number.
 - e. Signature of department/agency head authorizing transfer.
 - f. Special Notations: enter any information particular to your records, i.e., if you decide to retain your records for a particular record series longer than recommended by NYS Archives.
8. Once the boxes have been received, an Inventory Control Number will be assigned to each box which will be used reference the records in the future. For security reasons, all boxes at the CRC are "Blind Boxed", with no identifiable information on the outside of the box other than "CORTLAND RECORD CENTER/ INVENTORY CONTROL #", and the actual number. A copy of each transfer form will be sent to the department/agency head, and the original form will remain at the CRC. Retain department/agency copy as it contains the Inventory Control Number. You will use this number when requesting access to the records in the future.

II. RETRIEVAL OF RECORDS FROM THE RECORD CENTER:

1. Only individuals listed on a department's signature card may request a record and/or pick the record up. Any other individual who desires access to the records must submit a written request to the department/agency head. All requests to the records

storage facility must be in writing, using a Record Retrieval Request form with the following information:

- a. The name of the department/agency and person's name requesting the record or box of records.
 - b. The inventory control number for the box of records or specific records being requested.
 - c. The signature of the authorized individual requesting the record(s).
2. Upon receipt of a properly completed Records Retrieval Request form, the RMO or staff will pull the record for pick-up. Upon pick-up, you will sign the Record Retrieval Request form, and bring the form back when returning the record. A copy will be made for the CRC. This provides a record of when a file was requested and when it was returned.

III. USE OF THE RECORD CENTER:

If authorized department/agency personnel choose to refer to their records stored at the Record Center without removing them from the Center, they may do so by contacting RMO or staff. Department/agency personnel will need to know the inventory control number for the box of records to be referenced. Due to space constraints, large numbers of boxes cannot be pulled for reference at one time. In addition, departmental staff cannot refer to their boxes, repack their boxes, etc., in the storage room due to HIPAA security constraints. If large numbers of boxes need to have records pulled or repacked, these boxes will go back to the individual department and be returned with new transfer and/or disposition sheets made out by the department.

IV. RECORDS DISPOSITION PROCEDURE:

1. Periodically (annually or bi-annually), the RMO or staff determines which records stored at the CRC have met their legal retention requirements and are ready for disposition. Please note that the CRC is most efficiently used when records are disposed of in a timely manner.
2. The RMO or staff will prepare a Records Disposition Form. This form will be sent to the department/agency head, which will review the form and sign. The Records Management Officer (only the city RMO for city records) will sign the form next. When the records have been disposed of, the RMO or staff will return the original copy to the department/agency head for his/her permanent record, and the other copy will remain at the Record Center.
3. A mobile shredding unit will periodically be used to shred records that have been stored at the CRC and are eligible for disposition. Do not bring records to the CRC solely for shredding. In order to keep shredding costs down, please remove outside publications, binders, folders, etc., before sending records to the CRC. Departments

that conduct their own shredding must have a disposition record properly documented.

REVISED: 2005
2018