What is safekeeping?

Overview
The safekeeping of your records is a legislative requirement. It is also something which greatly aids the effectiveness of your business. The Public Records Act requires that you ensure the safekeeping of all the public records which you hold at all times and at all stages of their time with you. This document is designed to promote awareness around this topic and, where applicable, offer points of contact for further information and guidance. It covers physical storage and information security as well as order and integrity.

1 What constitutes good physical storage?
This is very important. You should ensure that all your records are stored in such a way as to be safe from physical harm and physically secure from inappropriate access but still readily accessible to the appropriate staff. Storage should at all times be in compliance with good health and safety practice.

1.1 Keeping your records safe from physical harm
This is a basic requirement of good record keeping wherever your records are stored. You should ensure that all your records are:

- not in an environment that is too hot, cold, damp or dry or subject to fluctuating conditions
- not stored where damage from water is a high risk, for example at floor level in a basement or below water pipes
- as secure as possible from fire
- secure from dirt, dust and infestation
- taken into account as part of routine good housekeeping (for example making sure taps are turned off before leaving) and also when any building maintenance is taking place
- given due consideration within your business continuity/disaster planning.

1.2 Keeping your records physically secure from inappropriate access
This is about ensuring the information in your records can only be physically accessed by appropriate individuals. Aspects of this should be covered by your organisation's information policy. You should ensure that the following is in place and applied:

- lockable records storage whether a filing cabinet, a records store or a computer screen
- clear desk policies
- controlled access to records storage areas (see below: 1.3)
- where relevant, the use of numbering rather than titles on folders and storage boxes with an index maintained and kept elsewhere. This makes illicit access to records harder.

1.3 Keeping your records accessible to the appropriate staff
This is an aid to business effectiveness. Considerations here are:

- ensuring keys, passwords and/or other security controls are available only to relevant staff
- the clear and consistent identification of records (see below: 3); staff accessing records also need to be familiar with systems used
- well-arranged storage (this applies to both electronic folders and boxed records).
1.4 Keeping your records in such a way as to promote good health and safety practice
Good records practice also makes good health and safety sense. This relates principally to paper-based records and considerations include ensuring that:

- record storage boxes are of appropriate specification and are not over-filled
- staff required to move boxes of records are both physically capable of doing so and are trained in manual handling
- records are stored in such a way so as not to restrict thoroughfares, most especially emergency exit routes
- records are never stored at the bottom of stairwells or on stairs
- boxed and unboxed records are not stacked in a dangerous manner
- suitable access equipment, such as kick stools or steps, is available if necessary and is used properly, checked regularly and maintained in good condition.

2 What about information security?
Many of the points above are also to be found in the information security policies (defined in Factsheet 4). These are a central pillar of record safekeeping for any organisation. For information on the Government’s information security policy, please see the appropriate intranet pages or, for specific enquiries, contact Gary Milligan, Government Security Officer, Treasury on 685020.

3 What are order and integrity?
Safekeeping includes both establishing and, importantly, maintaining order and integrity in the arrangement of your records.

Order is established through adopting a standard approach to file naming. This should extend across all your paper and e-records. This file plan system should always be based on function. Order is maintained through ensuring that staff consistently use this system once it is in place.

Integrity relates to maintaining the wholeness of an information system. It requires the creation and maintenance of accurate and complete records. It also requires that their order and relationships are maintained.

4 How can I get further IOMPRO guidance?
If you wish to talk to someone about anything in this document, or any issues raised by it, please contact the IOMPRO on 693569 or email us at public.records@gov.im.

These factsheets, together with other IOMPRO information, are available at http://www.gov.im/pro; if you have access to the IOM Government intranet you can also find them under Public Records on the Government page.

August 2015