



## Reference 02—Key Terms and Acronyms for the IPER Courses

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### Introduction

This guide to basic terminology has been compiled by the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) for reference by students taking its *Essential Records Webinar* training course. This course is one component of CoSA's Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER) Project, which is developing and delivering training on essential records and emergency preparedness for state and local governments in the United States. The IPER Project is funded by a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

This glossary was compiled in December 2009. An updated and more extensive glossary—as well as additional information about the IPER project—is available at [www.statearchivists.org/resource-center/iper](http://www.statearchivists.org/resource-center/iper), “Glossary of Key Terms for the IPER Essential Records Course” link.

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To enhance the definitions developed by CoSA during course development, this glossary uses content, in whole or part, from the published glossaries of two other professional associations and FEMA. Content attributions are indicated at the end of each term definition, as follows:

- [EMRIM]     **Emergency Management for Records and Information Management Programs.** Virginia A. Jones and Kris E. Keyes. ARMA International (2001). Glossary, pp. 83–87.
- [SAA]        Society of American Archivists, **Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology.**  
[www.archivists.org/glossary](http://www.archivists.org/glossary)
- [ARMA]      ARMA International, **Glossary of Records and Information Management Terms.**  
[www.arma.org/standards/glossary/index.cfm](http://www.arma.org/standards/glossary/index.cfm)
- [FEMA1]     Federal Emergency Management Agency, **National Response Framework (NRF) Resource Center Glossary/Acronyms.**  
[www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/glossary.htm](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nrf/glossary.htm)
- [FEMA2]     Federal Emergency Management Agency, **Federal Continuity Directive 1 (FCD 1), Federal Executive Branch National Continuity Program and Requirements, February 2008.**  
[www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/fcd1.pdf](http://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/org/ncp/fcd1.pdf)
- [FEMA3]     Federal Emergency Management Agency, **Developing and Maintaining State, Territorial, Tribal, and Local Government Emergency Plans (CPG 101). Appendix B: Glossary and List of Acronyms (March 2009).**  
[www.fema.gov/about/divisions/cpg.shtm](http://www.fema.gov/about/divisions/cpg.shtm)



[AIC] American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, **Definitions of Conservation Terminology**. <http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewpage&pageid=620>

**Acceptance (risk).** Involves recognizing the existence of a specific risk and having to accept the impact of the risk, should it occur. No action is taken (“do nothing” option).

**Access.** The ability to locate relevant records and information. May also refer to the permission to locate, retrieve, and review information within legally established restrictions of privacy, confidentiality, and security clearance. May also involve the physical processes of retrieving information from storage media. [SAA] *See also Confidential records, Freedom of information*

**All hazards.** Describing an incident, natural or manmade, that warrants action to protect life, property, environment, and public health or safety, and action to minimize disruptions of government, social, or economic activities. [FEMA3] *See also Disaster*

**Alliance for Response.** *See Heritage Preservation.*

**Archive.** When used by records management, the terms “archive” and “archives” often refer to an institution which collects permanent records after their current business use has ended, preserves them, and makes them available to the public for research and similar purposes. When used by information technology, the term “archive” refers to a collection of computer files that has been moved from active disk storage to another location (either for backup purposes or for storage on less expensive media) from which it can be accessed if needed. [SAA]

**Archives.** Materials created or received by an agency in the conduct of its business affairs and preserved because of their enduring value; permanent records. May also refer to the department within an organization responsible for maintaining the organization’s records of enduring value. May also refer to the building (or portion thereof) housing archival collections. [SAA] *See also Permanent preservation, State Archives*

**ARMA International.** A not-for-profit professional association focused on the management of records and information in paper and electronic form. [www.arma.org](http://www.arma.org)

**Backup.** When used by records management, the term “backup” refers to duplicate records stored off site under environmentally controlled conditions for protection of the information in case the original records are lost or damaged. They usually satisfy the limited-term business retention requirements of the information contained in the backup. Backups are *not* substitutes for permanent retention of electronic records, which are stored in archives. [ARMA]

**Business Impact Analysis (BIA).** The process of analyzing all business functions and the effects that a specific emergency may have upon those functions. [EMRIM]

**Chief Information Officer (CIO).** The executive officer in charge of information processing in an organization. Typically, systems design, development, and datacenter operations fall under CIO jurisdiction.



**Cold site.** An alternative facility that provides space for you to bring in whatever equipment you need, but does not provide the equipment, supplies, etc., you need to continue operations. Cold sites are less expensive than hot sites. *See also Hot site*

**Confidential records.** Records to which access is restricted by law. Access may be limited to authorized persons and/or for a specified time period. Such records often include those relating to personnel, client health, labor or business negotiations, and juvenile offenses, among others. *See also Access, Restricted records, Open records laws*

**Conservation.** The repair or stabilization of materials through chemical or physical treatment to ensure that they survive in their original form as long as possible. The profession devoted to the preservation of cultural property for the future through examination, documentation, treatment, and preventive care, supported by research and education. Conservation counters existing damage, as distinguished from preservation, which attempts to prevent damage. Conservation does not always eliminate evidence of damage; restoration includes techniques to return materials to their original appearances (which may include fabrication of missing pieces). [SAA]

**Conservator.** Professional whose primary occupation is the practice of conservation and who, through specialized education, knowledge, training, and experience, formulates and implements all the activities of conservation in accordance with an ethical code such as the *AIC Code of Ethics and Guidelines for Practice* (AIC Definitions). [SAA]

**Continuity.** An uninterrupted ability to provide services and support, while maintaining organizational viability, before, during, and after an event. [FEMA2]

**Continuity Assistance Tool (CAT).** Created by FEMA to work with Continuity Guidance Circular 1. It contains a series of checklists that agencies can use to measure how well they are achieving the capabilities outlined in the Circular. [REPR IG]

**Continuity Guidance Circular 1.** Created by FEMA to provide direction for developing continuity plans and programs for non-federal entities, i.e., state, local, territorial, and tribal governments and the private sector. [REPR IG]

**Continuity of Government (COG).** A coordinated effort within each branch of government (e.g., the federal government's executive branch) to ensure that National Essential Functions (NEFs) continue to be performed during a catastrophic emergency. Note: This term may also be applied to non-federal governments. [FEMA2]

**Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan.** An effort within individual agencies to ensure that they can continue to perform their essential functions during a wide range of emergencies, including acts of nature, accidents, and technological or attack-related emergencies. [FEMA2] *See also Disaster Plan, Emergency Plan*

**Council of State Archivists (CoSA).** A national organization representing the directors of the state archival agencies in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the territories. In 37 states, the state archivists also bear responsibility for records management services.  
[www.statearchivists.org](http://www.statearchivists.org)



**Cycling.** The periodic replacement or updating of essential records by means of a rotation schedule, replacing obsolete copies of essential records with current copies.

**dPlan.** A free online tool that simplifies the process of writing a disaster plan for your collections. *dPlan in Depth* displays all the data entry forms in dPlan and creates a comprehensive disaster plan that covers disaster prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. *dPlan light* displays only those data entry forms that are most important in preparing a plan for emergency response. [www.dplan.org](http://www.dplan.org)

**Data migration.** The set of tasks involved in transferring digital materials from one hardware or software configuration to another, or from one generation of computer technology to a newer generation. The process of moving data from one information system or storage medium to another to ensure continued access to the information as the system or medium is replaced, becomes obsolete, or degrades over time. [SAA]

**Delegation of authority.** Identification, by position, of the authorities for making policy determinations and decisions at HQ, field levels, and all other organizational locations. Generally, predetermined delegations of authority will take effect when normal channels of direction have been disrupted and will lapse when these channels have been reestablished. [FEMA2]

**Disaster.** An occurrence of a natural catastrophe, technological accident, or human-caused event that has resulted in severe property damage, deaths, and/or multiple injuries. Natural disasters include “Acts of God” events, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods. Technological disasters are events caused by human error such as airplane crashes, building and equipment failures, electrical malfunctions, and hazardous material accidents. Civil disasters are deliberate destructive activities causing illness, injury, and death, such as theft, vandalism, terrorism, and war. As defined in the Stafford Act, a *large-scale disaster* is “one that exceeds the response capability of the local jurisdiction and requires state, and potentially federal, involvement.” Likewise, a *major disaster* is “any natural catastrophe [...] or, regardless of cause, any fire, flood, or explosion, in any part of the United States, which in the determination of the President causes damage of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant major disaster assistance under [the] Act to supplement the efforts and available resources of states, local governments, and disaster relief organizations in alleviating the damage, loss, hardship, or suffering caused thereby.” (Stafford Act, Sec. 102(2), 42 U.S.C. 5122(2)). [FEMA3] *See also All hazards*

**Disaster Plan.** A document that describes how people and property will be protected in disaster and disaster threat situations; details who is responsible for carrying out specific actions; identifies the personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available for use in the disaster; and outlines how all actions will be coordinated. [SAA] *See also Continuity of Operations Plan, Emergency Plan*

**Dispersal.** The transfer of duplicate records to locations other than those where the originals are housed. [EMRIM] *See also Duplicate, duplication*



**Document.** The process of recording government actions for administrative, legal, fiscal, and historical purposes. May also refer to any written or printed work; a writing. May also refer to information or data fixed in some media. May also refer to written or printed work of a legal or official nature that may be used as evidence or proof; a record. [SAA] *See also Non-record materials, Record*

**Duplicate, duplication.** A copy, or the process of making a copy, that preserves all the essential aspects of the original. [SAA] *See also Dispersal*

**Electronic record.** Any information recorded in a form that only a computer or other electronic device can process and that satisfies a state or jurisdiction's definition of a record. Electronic records received or sent and used to conduct government business are public records. *See also Record, Record format*

**Electronic vaulting.** Disaster-planning service that involves moving data over a network to a secure remote site according to an established schedule. [ARMA]

**Emergency.** An unplanned adverse event that requires an organization's personnel to initiate activities to secure operations or protect organization assets from harm. [EMRIM]

**Emergency management.** The coordination and integration of all activities necessary to build, sustain, and improve the capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, or mitigate threatened or actual natural disasters, acts of terrorism, or other human-caused disasters. [FEMA1]

**Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC).** A congressionally ratified organization that provides form and structure to interstate mutual aid. Through EMAC, a disaster-affected state can request and receive assistance from other member states quickly and efficiently, resolving two key issues up front: liability and reimbursement. [FEMA1]

**Emergency Plan.** The ongoing plan maintained by various jurisdictional levels for responding to a wide variety of potential hazards. It describes how people and property will be protected; details who is responsible for carrying out specific actions; identifies the personnel, equipment, facilities, supplies, and other resources available; and outlines how all actions will be coordinated. [FEMA3] *See also Continuity of Operations Plan, Disaster Plan*

**Emergency Support Function (ESF) Annexes.** When activated to provide coordinated federal support during an incident, presents the missions, policies, structures, and responsibilities of federal agencies for coordinating resource and programmatic support to states, tribes, and other federal agencies or other jurisdictions and entities. Records and natural, cultural, and historic collections are covered by ESF-11. [FEMA1].

**Essential functions.** The critical activities performed by organizations, especially after a disruption of normal activities. [FEMA2]



**Essential records.** Records needed for the Continuity of Operations (COOP) of a government agency during and following an emergency. They are records an agency must have to perform one or more of the following critical functions: operate during an emergency; resume or continue business after an emergency; re-establish the legal, financial, and/or functional status of the agency; rebuild the community after the crisis passes. Sometimes referred to as “vital records,” e.g., by the National Archives and Records Administration.

**Essential Records Template.** An IPER-suggested method for including essential records information in an agency’s COOP Plan. The template should be used if an agency does not already have a template in place.

**Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).** Agency of the U.S. government tasked with Disaster Mitigation, Preparedness, Response and Recovery planning. [FEMA1]

**Formats (of records).** *See Records format, Medium*

**Freedom of information.** One of several terms referring to the rights of people to access government records. *See also Access, Confidential records, Open records laws, Restricted records*

**Freeze drying.** Process of stabilizing water-soaked documents by freezing them to prevent further damage from water in its liquid state. [ARMA]

**Full-scale exercise.** A multi-agency, multijurisdictional, multidiscipline exercise involving functional (e.g., Joint Field Office, Emergency Operations Centers) and “boots on the ground” response (e.g., continuity staff relocating to their alternate sites to conduct scenario-driven essential functions). [FEMA2]

**Functional exercise.** An exercise examining and/or validating the coordination, command, and control between various multi-agency coordination centers (e.g., Emergency Operations Centers, Joint Field Office). A functional exercise does not involve any “boots on the ground” (i.e., first responders or emergency officials responding to an incident in real time). [FEMA2]

**‘Grab and Go’ kit.** A kit prepared by, and for, an individual who expects to deploy to an alternative location during an emergency. The kit contains items needed to satisfy minimally an individual’s personal and professional needs during deployment. May also be referred to as a “Drive-away kit.” [FEMA2]

**Hazard.** Something that is potentially dangerous or harmful, often the root cause of an unwanted outcome. [FEMA1]



**Heritage Preservation.** A nonprofit organization that is a leader in preservation and emergency preparedness for cultural organizations of all kinds, including archives, libraries, and museums. With FEMA, Heritage Preservation co-sponsors the *Heritage Emergency National Task Force* to help institutions and individuals learn how to protect their valuables from emergencies of all types and how best to respond if the worst happens. The *Alliance for Response* project brings cultural institutions and emergency workers together to build effective emergency response networks. Heritage Preservation developed and distributes the *Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel* and the *Field Guide to Emergency Response*, both of which are indispensable references.

**Hot site.** An alternative facility that already has in place the computer, telecommunications, other information technology, environmental infrastructure, and personnel required to recover critical business functions or information systems. [FEMA2]

**Incident.** An occurrence or event, natural or human-caused, that requires a response to protect life or property. Incidents can, for example, include major disasters, emergencies, terrorist attacks, terrorist threats, civil unrest, wildland and urban fires, floods, hazardous materials spills, nuclear accidents, aircraft accidents, earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, tropical storms, tsunamis, war-related disasters, public health and medical emergencies, and other occurrences requiring an emergency response. [FEMA1]

**Incident Command System (ICS).** A standardized on-scene emergency management construct specifically designed to provide an integrated organizational structure that reflects the complexity and demands of single or multiple incidents, without being hindered by jurisdictional boundaries. ICS is the combination of facilities, equipment, personnel, procedures, and communications operating within a common organizational structure and designed to aid in the management of resources during incidents. It is used for all kinds of emergencies and is applicable to small as well as large and complex incidents. ICS is used by various jurisdictions and functional agencies, both public and private, to organize field-level incident management operations. [FEMA3]

**Information technology (IT).** Infrastructure, processes, and technologies used to store, generate, manipulate, and transmit information to support an organization. [ARMA]

**Intergovernmental Preparedness for Essential Records (IPER) Project.** A project created by the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) and funded by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The purpose of the IPER Project is to deliver training to state and local governments nationwide, providing the knowledge and skills needed to secure essential records and recover records damaged by natural or human-caused emergencies. IPER's training curriculum consists of two primary courses: *Essential Records* and *Records Emergency Planning and Response*. Also part of the IPER curriculum is a third, supporting course, *Introduction to Records and Information Management for State and Local Governments*. This course provides a basic understanding of records management and prepares employees with little or no records management experience for the two primary courses.



**Interleaving.** Sheets of paper, usually tissue, inserted between the pages of a book or album, especially between illustrative plates and text. [SAA]

**Intrinsic value.** The usefulness or significance of an item derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its content, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction. Intrinsic value may include an item's form, layout, materials, or process. It may also be based on an item's direct relationship to a significant person, activity, event, organization, or place. Intrinsic value is independent of informational or evidential value. A record may have great intrinsic value without significant informational or evidential value; records with significant informational or evidential value may have little intrinsic value. The process of copying a document may sufficiently capture its informational or evidential value but fail to preserve some aspects of the material nature of the original—its intrinsic value—that merit preservation. Hence, documents with significant intrinsic value are often preserved in their original form. [SAA]

**Inventory, records.** *See Records inventory*

**IPER Resource Center.** *See Resource Center*

**MayDay.** Archives and cultural organizations in the United States observe “MayDay” on the first day of May to focus attention on emergency preparedness.

**Medium.** A general term referring to the material (e.g., paper, disk, tape) on which business information has been recorded and may subsequently be used for business purposes. [ARMA]

**Microfilm.** Transparent film containing highly reduced copies of documents. May also refer to the high-resolution, low-grain film used to make such copies. Microfilm may be created in rolls, sheets (microfiche), strips (usually in jackets), or chips (usually in aperture cards). Standard widths of roll film include 35 mm and 16 mm. Microfilm may use gelatin silver, diazo, or vesicular processes to form the images. [SAA] *See also Microform*

**Microform.** A general term used for any medium, transparent or opaque, that holds highly reduced reproductions, including microfilm and microfiche. [SAA] *See also Microfilm*

**Migration.** *See Data migration*

**Mirroring.** A method of data replication that maintains an exact copy of electronic records by applying changes at the secondary site in lockstep with or synchronous with changes at the primary site. [ARMA]

**Mitigation (risk).** Involves taking steps to minimize the likelihood or impact of an emergency. You may not be able to prevent a risk or threat from occurring, but you may be able to reduce the likelihood of its occurrence, or mitigate the impact it has on your agency if it does occur.

**National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).** The federal agency charged with managing and preserving the records of the federal government. [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov)



**National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators (NAGARA).** A professional association dedicated to helping government archivists and Records Managers at all levels of government. *www.nagara.org*

**National Continuity Policy (NCP).** The policy of the United States to maintain a comprehensive and effective continuity capability composed of Continuity of Operations and Continuity of Government programs in order to ensure the preservation of our form of government under the Constitution and the continuing performance of National Essential Functions under all conditions. (NSPD 51/HSPD 20, National Continuity Policy) [FEMA2]

**National Incident Management System (NIMS).** System that provides a proactive approach guiding government agencies at all levels, the private sector, and nongovernmental organizations to work seamlessly to prepare for, prevent, respond to, recover from, and mitigate the effects of incidents, regardless of cause, size, location, or complexity, in order to reduce the loss of life or property and harm to the environment. [FEMA1]

**National Response Framework (NRF).** A guide for conducting comprehensive, national, all-hazards incident management. The NRF incorporates public- and private-sector participation at all levels, from federal agencies to the state and community level, and also emphasizes the importance of personal preparedness by individuals and their families. [FEMA2]

**Non-record materials.** Materials considered not to fall within the definition of an official record. May also refer to copies, duplicates, or publications that are kept for purposes of personal reference or convenience. May also refer to materials that do not appear on a records retention schedule and that may be destroyed without authorization. Definitions and requirements may vary by individual state laws, rules, and regulations. *See also Document, Public record, Record*

**Open records law.** A law created to ensure public access to government records. *See also Access, Confidential records, Freedom of information, Restricted records*

**Pack-out.** The process of removing the boxes of records from the shelves, moving them to a staging area, applying the tracking procedures, and moving them from there to the recovery area or to the contractor's facility. [REPR IG]

**Permanent preservation.** The process of preserving a record that has been determined to have sufficient historical, administrative, legal, fiscal, or other value to warrant continuing preservation. (ARMA) *See also Archives, State archives*

**Phone tree.** A pyramidal network of people used to spread a message quickly and efficiently to a large number of people. The person at the top of the pyramid calls two or more people, each of whom calls two or more people, and so on, until every person in the tree has been called. [REPR IG]

**Pocket Response Plan® (PReP).** A concise document for recording essential information needed by staff in case of an emergency. The PReP is meant to complement, not replace, an agency's disaster plan, ensuring that managers and staff have the most essential information with them at all times.



**Polyester film.** A clear plastic film that is relatively stiff, cannot be stretched, and is hard to tear. Polyester film is commonly used to make protective enclosures and is used as the base for some photographic films. Not all polyester films are identical. Different manufacturing processes leave different residual chemicals in the film, some of which may have an adverse effect on archival materials. [SAA]

**Preparedness.** Actions that involve a combination of planning, resources, training, exercising, and organizing to build, sustain, and improve operational capabilities. Preparedness is the process of identifying the personnel, training, and equipment needed for a wide range of potential incidents, and developing jurisdiction-specific plans for delivering capabilities when needed for an incident. [FEMA1]

**Preservation.** The professional discipline of protecting materials by minimizing chemical and physical deterioration and damage to minimize the loss of information and to extend the life of cultural property. The act of keeping from harm, injury, decay, or destruction, especially through noninvasive treatment. Preservation activities are often considered a subdiscipline within the profession of conservation. [SAA]

**Prevention.** Actions taken to avoid an incident or to intervene to stop an incident from occurring. Prevention involves actions to protect lives and property. It involves applying intelligence and other information to a range of activities that may include such countermeasures as deterrence operations; heightened inspections; improved surveillance and security operations; investigations to determine the full nature and source of the threat; public health and agricultural surveillance and testing processes; immunizations, isolation, or quarantine; and, as appropriate, specific law enforcement operations aimed at deterring, preempting, interdicting, or disrupting illegal activity and apprehending potential perpetrators and bringing them to justice. [FEMA1]

**Public record.** Any book, paper, map, photograph, database records, email messages, images, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, that are made or received by a government agency and are evidence of the agency's activities or have informational value. Each state has its own unique definition of a record; some have multiple definitions in their statutes addressing retention, information systems, privacy, access, and admissibility in court proceedings. *See also Record, Document, Non-record materials*

**Record.** Recorded information, regardless of medium or characteristics, made or received by an organization in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. *See also Document, Electronic record, Nonrecord materials, Public record*

**Records Emergency Action Plan (REAP).** A written, approved, implemented, and periodically tested plan that includes the information and actions needed to respond to and recover from a records emergency. It is not the disaster plan itself, it is only an element of the plan—the portion of your disaster plan that relates to records. [REPR IG]

**Records format.** Records exist in many formats, not just paper. These include microforms, photographs, audio and video recordings, and electronic records. *See also Electronic record, Formats (of records), Medium*



**Records center.** An area for lower-cost storage, maintenance, and reference use of semi-active (inactive) records pending their ultimate disposition. [ARMA]

**Records disposition plan.** *See Records retention schedule.*

**Records inventory.** A detailed listing of the types, locations, dates, volumes, equipment, classification systems, and usage data of an organization's records, made in order to evaluate, appraise, and organize the information. [ARMA] *See also Records retention schedule*

**Records management.** The administrative and managerial activities related to managing records throughout their life cycle—from creation to their final stage of disposition, in which they are either destroyed or permanently preserved. May also refer to the field of management responsible for the efficient and systematic control of the creation, receipt, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, including processes for capturing and maintaining evidence of and information about business activities and transactions in the form of records. [ARMA] *See also State Records Manager*

**Records management program.** An effective program usually includes the following elements: obtaining strong policy and financial support from the governing or supervisory authority; developing policies and procedures for managing records and information; putting in place filing and indexing systems and tools; conducting an inventory of records; establishing and following records retention schedules; identifying and using technology appropriately to create, store, and retrieve materials; storing inactive records in a cost-effective and secure manner; destroying obsolete records in a timely and systematic manner and documenting their destruction; and identifying and preserving essential records.

**Records retention requirements.** State, federal, or local regulations to maintain and provide access to listed records for a specified time period. State requirements are often issued by rule or law by the State Archivist or authorized Records Management Office. Federal requirements are often specified in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). Local requirements may be specified in policies, codes, regulations, or charters. Retention periods are based on legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical requirements. *See also Records retention schedule*

**Records retention schedules.** The documents that authorize the period of time that records are kept before they are destroyed or kept permanently. Records retention schedules are also sometimes used to identify essential records and to plan for their protection in an emergency. Most government agencies, from the federal level to the local level and the territorial and tribal levels, have mandated records retention and management requirements, governed by laws, rules, and regulations. Typically, there are two types of records retention schedules: General Records Retention Schedules, which cover commonly occurring cross-agency records, and Special Records Retention Schedules, which list program records unique to a particular agency. *See also Records inventory, Records retention requirements*

**Record series.** A group of related records that are filed and/or used together as a unit and therefore are evaluated as a unit for retention purposes, e.g., a personnel file consisting of an application, reference letters, benefit forms, etc. [ARMA] *See also Records retention schedule*



**Recovery.** The implementation of prioritized actions required to return an organization's processes and support functions to operational stability following an interruption or disaster. [FEMA2]

**Recovery Time Objective (RTO).** Refers to the tolerable amount of time after an emergency in which a computer system, network, or application must be restored to functional status so that disruption of normal operations and loss of revenue are minimized.

**Resource Center (IPER).** The section of the CoSA website providing access to a range of information about records and archives, including specific regulations, statutes, standards and other guidance, that apply to government records in each state and territory.  
*www.statearchivists.org/resource-center*

**Response.** Immediate actions taken to save lives, protect property and the environment, and meet basic human needs. Also includes the execution of emergency plans and actions to support short-term recovery. [FEMA1]

**Restricted records.** A limitation on access to records or to information of a specified type imposed by general or specific requirements. [ARMA] *See also Access, Confidential records, Freedom of information, Open records laws*

**Retention schedule.** *See Records retention schedule*

**Retention.** *See Records retention schedule or Records retention requirements*

**Risk acceptance.** *See Acceptance (risk)*

**Risk analysis.** The systematic use of available information to determine how often specified events may occur and the magnitude of the consequences if they do occur. It is used to evaluate the probability of occurrence of the risk identified in the risk assessment, and the impact the occurrence of those risks would have on your records and information.

**Risk assessment.** Examination of the potential harm that may result from exposure to certain hazards. Simply put, risk assessment is the identification of risks.

**Risk management.** The process of identifying and evaluating risk and then developing strategies to manage the risk. Basic strategies for managing risk include avoidance, acceptance, and mitigation.

**Risk mitigation.** *See Mitigation (risk)*

**Salvage.** The process of retrieving damaged records from areas affected by an emergency and protecting records at risk of damage.

**Schedule.** *See Records retention schedule*

**Security classification.** A classification placed on records limiting their accessibility to those having specific authority to retrieve or use them. [ARMA]

**Series.** *See Record series*



**Stabilization.** Treatment procedures intended to maintain the integrity of cultural property and to minimize deterioration. [AIC]

**Stafford Act.** The Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, P.L. 93-288, as amended. This Act describes the programs and processes by which the federal government provides disaster and emergency assistance to state and local governments, tribal nations, eligible private nonprofit organizations, and individuals affected by a declared major disaster or emergency. The Stafford Act covers all hazards, including natural disasters and terrorist events. [FEMA1]

**Staging area.** Any location in which personnel, supplies, and equipment can be housed or parked temporarily while awaiting operational assignment. [FEMA1]

**Stakeholders.** The persons or organizations that depend on the services of an agency. Building a network of key stakeholders and soliciting their input and support is important in identifying, protecting, and planning for access to essential records and in developing a plan for emergency preparedness and response.

**State archives.** A state government agency that serves by law as the depository of public records of state government—records which possess permanent administrative, legal, or historical research values. Some State Archives also serve as the official depositories of permanent local government records. State Archives collections often do not include manuscript, newspaper, or other nonofficial sources. Many State Archives also oversee records management, setting policy and regulations for the retention and disposition of public records.

**State Archivist.** The state government official who manages the State Archives. *See also State Records Manager*

**State Coordinating Officer.** The individual appointed by the Governor to coordinate state emergency response and disaster assistance efforts with those of the federal government. The SCO plays a critical role in managing the state response and recovery operations following Stafford Act declarations. The Governor of the affected state appoints the SCO, and lines of authority flow from the Governor to the SCO, following the state's policies and laws. [FEMA3]

**State Records Manager.** The state government official who manages the state's Records Management Program. In most states, this function is assigned to the State Archives. In a few states, the Archives and Records Management functions are divided between different agencies. *See also Records management, State Archivist*

**Tabletop exercise.** An exercise involving key personnel discussing simulated scenarios in an informal setting. [FEMA2]

**Warm site.** An alternative facility that is equipped with some computer, telecommunications, other information technology, and environmental infrastructure, and can function as backup after additional personnel, equipment, supplies, software, or customization are provided. [FEMA2]

**Vacuum thermal drying.** Treatment of water-soaked documents by drying under high vacuum and high temperature to prevent further damage. [ARMA]



**Vital records.** *See Essential records*

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## Watch Your Lingo!

The **Introduction to Records and Information Management** course points out that archivists, Records Managers, emergency managers, and information technology (IT) specialists use many of the same terms, but sometimes those terms have different meanings for each specialty.

**Record.** When used by records management, the term “record” refers to any material that documents a transaction or activity of public business (a document, map, photograph, etc.). However, when used by IT, the term “record” refers to a collection of fields (individual items) in a database that make up a complete set of information (that is, if describing a person, a record would include name, address, phone number, etc.).

**Essential records vs. vital records.** The term “essential records” is used by both records management and emergency management to refer to those records that are critically important to the continued functioning or rebuilding of an agency during and after an emergency. These same records are also known widely as “vital records”; however, the term “vital records” also has a second meaning, especially in state and local governments, and that can lead to confusion. “Vital records” can also refer to records that document critical events in an individual’s life, such as birth, marriage, divorce, and death. To minimize potential confusion, CoSA has chosen to use the term “essential records” throughout the IPER training, but other organizations—including FEMA and the National Archives—continue to use “vital records” to describe records that are critical to continuity of operations.

**File.** When used by records management, the term “file” refers to a collection of business materials arranged according to a plan and related to each other in some way (for example, a case file). However, when used by IT, the term “file” may refer to a collection of records (when used in a data-processing context) or to an entity of information (when used in a computer application context like word processing or spreadsheets). In an application context, a “file” typically has a unique name, a particular format, and a specific file name suffix—e.g., .doc or .xls.

**Document.** When used by records management, the term “document” refers to information (such as a book, memo, letter, or map) that can be accessed and read. However, when used by IT, the term “document” refers to a word-processing text file, completed form, voucher, or other representation of stored information.