

Keeping Records

The ACT Rural Fire Service Chief Officer has issued this standard operating procedure (SOP) under Section 38(1) of the *Emergency Act 2004* – A Chief Officer may determine standards and protocols.

Purpose

This SOP is to inform RFS members of records that need to be kept by brigades.

Scope

This SOP is applicable to all personnel of the ACT Rural Fire Service (ACTRFS), as defined in the *Emergencies Act 2004*.

Background

Records are evidence of business activity. The *Territory Records Act 2002* (the Act) defines them as 'information created and kept, or received and kept, as evidence and information by a person in accordance with a legal obligation or in the course of conducting business'.

While the term 'record' has a specific meaning, in practice it can at times be difficult to distinguish between records and other types of information or data. Although the Act only applies to records, its principles can be applied to all ACT Government information and data holdings.

The Territory Records Office recommends that if there is doubt as to whether ACT Government information or data meet the definition of a record, the ACT Public Service Standard for Records, Information and Data should be applied.

Under the Act, each agency is responsible for the safekeeping and proper preservation of its records. *The Information Privacy Act 2014* also requires that any personal information is stored securely so that unauthorised persons do not access it. All records that contain members' personal information should be stored in a locked filing cabinet.

In addition to the Act, the Notifiable Instrument: *NI 20-227 Records Disposal Schedule – Emergency Management* specifies the mandatory retention period for records used by emergency services, including ACTRFS.

As incorporated entities, brigades are also required to report to the ACT Government on membership, finances and office bearers under the *Associations Incorporation Act 1991*.

Responsibilities

Members	Take notes in the event of an incident, WHS incident or fatality.
Brigade Executive	Ensure records are kept securely and maintained by the brigades for membership, committees, meetings, disputes, equipment and safety.
ACTRFS Membership Officer	Ensure membership records are maintained centrally. Ensure the privacy of members' information is protected.
ACTRFS Assistant Director, Membership & Engagement	Store records as described in this SOP.
ACTRFS Duty Officer	Ensure records for incidents, WHS matters and records of conversation are kept. Ensure that records for major emergency events or where a fatality has occurred are retained as part of the Territory Archive. Store records as described in this SOP.
ACTRFS Director, Operations	Ensure that records for major emergency events or where a fatality has occurred are retained as part of the Territory Archive. Store records as described in this SOP.

Operating procedure

This SOP applies to the following types of documents held or created by brigade members.

- Incident/event records
 - log books
 - annotated maps
 - personal notes from incidents.
 - decisions made during incidents/events
 - photographs
- WHS records
 - photographs
 - paper notes taken about WHS incident
 - Riskman reports
 - quarterly facility safety checks

- Membership records
 - Membership details
 - disciplinary actions and associated correspondence and notes
 - applications for membership
 - training records
 - current qualifications
 - years of service
 - nominations for brigade office positions and awards
 - annual fitness testing
- Committee records
 - minutes of meetings
 - elections of office bearers
 - results of decisions
 - agendas
 - briefing papers
- Brigade finances
 - ledger of income and expenditure
 - receipts
 - audit reports
- Equipment records
 - vehicle servicing schedules
 - equipment serviceability
- Readiness audit reports
 - conducted before start of each bushfire season.

The following records should be maintained by the ACTRFS brigades:

Record type	Maintained by	Retention period	Comments
Incident record	Members	7 years	In the case of a major event or if a fatality has occurred, these records should be sent to the ACTRFS Director Operations, as part of the Territory Archive. Aerial photographs should also be retained as part of the Territory Archives.

Record type	Maintained by	Retention period	Comments
WHS records	Member, Brigade Safety Officer, Health and Safety Representative, RFS Membership Officer, Assistant Director Membership & Engagement	7 years	These records are stored centrally using Riskman, however, ancillary documents may exist and should be stored securely as required. These include medical records as required to undertake Work Capacity Test and be forwarded to Assistant Director, Membership & Engagement and stored by them.
Membership records	Brigade Executive	7 years	Brigades may keep membership records longer as they form part of a Brigade's history.
Committee records	Brigade Executive	7 years	Brigades may keep committee records longer as they form part of a Brigade's history.
Brigade financial records and audit reports	Brigade Executive	7 years	These records should be forwarded to ACTRFS Assistant Director, Membership & Engagement and stored by them. See Service Standard 3.1.10, Management of Brigade Funds.
Equipment records	Brigade Executive	7 years	These records should be forwarded to ACTRFS Director, Operations and stored by them.
Readiness audit report	Brigade Executive	7 years	These records should be forwarded to ACTRFS Director, Operations and stored by them.

Privacy requirements

As provided by the *ACT Information Privacy Act 2014*, all records that relate to personal information must be stored securely, preferably in a locked filing cabinet, to protect the privacy of members. Access to these records should only be available for RFS business by appropriate members. No unauthorised access to these records is permitted. These include:

- membership records
- WHS reports
- information relating to resolution of disputes
- disciplinary records
- annual fitness test.

Disposing of records


At the end of the mandatory retention period, records should be destroyed securely.

Document information

Version history

Author	Version	Version Approval Date	Summary of Changes
Rohan Scott	1.0	09/09/2020	First issue
Simon May	2.0	22/06/2021	Administrative Review
Andrew Gradie	3.0	1/03/2023	Administrative Review

Approved by

Name	Title/Role	Signature	Date
Rohan Scott	Chief Officer ACTRFS		08/02/2024

Document Owner

Position	Section
Assistant Director	Membership and Engagement

Next review due: 01/02/2027

Related documents

Document name
Territory Records Act 2002
ACT Public Service Standard for Records, Information and Data
Notifiable Instrument 2020-227 Records Disposal Schedule – Emergency Management
Information Privacy Act 2014
Associations Incorporation Act 1991
3.1.10 Management of Brigade Funds Service Standard

Signed documents will be scanned and filed in TRIM.