RIM

FACT SHEET #3

Recorded Information Management

Security and Integrity of Recorded Information

In Fact Sheets #1 and #2, we began communicating details of the new RIM directive on how to handle recorded information, a vitally important government resource.

As a manager, you now know that Management Board Directive 7-5 makes you directly responsible for ensuring the proper management of recorded information. And you now understand that RIM is critical to ensuring public accountability, and that it will help you achieve maximum efficiency in maintaining and accessing the records in your trust.

The security of recorded information in your program should be consistent with:

- the information's importance to the government and the public
- protection of personal privacy
- the cost of replacing information and the potential for its being harmed
- its possible archival value

Fact Sheet #2 focused on record scheduling...why and how to do it and who can help. Fact Sheet #3 highlights another element crucial to the process, and that is how to maintain the security and integrity of the recorded information in your program.

"Security and integrity...what does that mean with respect to RIM?"

It means protecting the recorded information in your custody from unauthorized access, alteration, removal or destruction. Very simply, it's your job to make sure records are stored in secure facilities and that they are preserved in stable media.

A record of long-term or permanent value that is poorly preserved will not be available for future generations. A record that has been illegitimately altered or destroyed is a serious waste of a government resource.

As a manager, you have to always keep in mind that the people of Ontario have entrusted you with the care of these records. If your records are not protected, you may lose proof of your own good work and that of others in public service.

"How can I make sure that records in my custody are protected against harm and unauthorised access? I'm not an expert in this field."

You don't necessarily have to be. Help is available, and here are a few common sense steps to take.

1. Schedule your records

- This ensures that nothing important can be prematurely destroyed. A schedule is a binding agreement, which tells you how long records are kept and whether they are eventually transferred to the Archives of Ontario. Refer to RIM Fact Sheet #2 for a discussion of scheduling.

2. Protect Access

- Make sure that records exempt from public access under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act are accessible to staff only on a "need to know basis."
- In general, limit access to areas where sensitive records are stored.
- Use a tracking system and password protection to monitor the use of data in computerized systems.
- Lock filing cabinets and maintain a policy of limited key distribution.
- Include security provisions in contracts with any outside suppliers hired to handle or dispose of records.
- Keep computer disks in a secured area.

3. Anticipate Disaster

- Keep records and record-processing equipment off floors and out of environments vulnerable to fire or flood.
- Use fire resistant filing cabinets.
- Check for computer viruses on a regular basis.
- Have an emergency disaster plan in place to make sure you are able to recover lost information quickly.
- Use "acid-free" paper for documents which must last a long time. (Paper with high acid content slowly self destructs.)
- Use microfilm which meets national and international standards for readability and longevity.

4. Be Organized

- Know where your records are located: this means having good file plans and systems in place. (More about this in Fact Sheet #4)
- Back up your computer files.

5. Get Help If You Need It

- Talk to your ministry systems and records management people about these and other suggestions for maintaining the security and integrity of recorded information in your program.
- Consult Management Board Directive 7-3, Information Technology Security, and look at the accompanying Manager's Guide to Information Technology Security.

"It sounds like being organized is the key to RIM."

It sure is.

But being organized is no longer a matter of personal work style. It's a corporate philosophy based on how government should serve the public.

"So what was that you said about helping me to get more organized?"

Stay tuned for Fact Sheet #4. It will outline some simple steps to better organization and improved access to records.

*For more information about this **Fact Sheet**, contact the **Archives of Ontario** Policy Unit at **(416) 327-1568** or **(416) 327-1570** or* rim@archives.gov.on.ca