

Records Retention Schedule for Churches and Districts

Keeping and maintaining accurate records for your church is prudent and necessary if not imperative. The following is a partial list of recommended records retention schedules. You may wish to add to the list based on your particular needs. Please keep in mind that the laws of each state differ in terms of requirements, and an attorney familiar with and licensed to advise in such matters should be consulted.

Your church may want to consider keeping many of these documents and records electronically. The following time periods applies to both physical and electronic documents.

Permanent Records Retention Schedule

These are records vital to your organization. Copies or originals of some of these records (articles of incorporation, bylaws, etc.) should be stored offsite in a secure location such as a local bank or in a fireproof file cabinet or vault.

- Corporate records and documents such as articles of incorporation, bylaws, annual corporate reports, corporate seals, minute books, signed minutes of the Board and all committees
- Licenses and permits
- Property records and documents such as property deeds, assessments, and rights of way
- Property Insurance policies
- Property appraisals by outside appraisers
- Construction documents
- Audit reports
- Financial Statements
- General Ledgers
- Contribution records
- Cash Books
- Charts of Accounts
- Documents evidencing terms, conditions, or restrictions on gifts
- Tax-exemption documents and related correspondence
- Depreciation schedules
- IRS rulings Tax returns-income, franchise, property
- Annual Information returns - federal and state
- IRS or other government audit records

Temporary Records Retention Schedule

The retention period for the following documents and records is 7 years.

- Accounts payable and accounts receivable ledgers and schedules
- Bank reconciliations, statements and canceled checks
- Electronic fund transfer documents
- Notes receivable ledgers and schedules
- Employee expense reports
- Investment records (7 years after sale of the investment)
- Annual audit records, including work papers and other documents that related to the audit (7 years after the completion of the audit)
- Contracts and related correspondence (7 years after expiration or termination)
- Excise tax records
- Tax bills, receipts, statements
- Tax work paper packages-originals
- Sales/use tax records
- Payroll tax records
- Payroll registers
- Personnel records such as commissions, bonuses, incentives, and awards
- Payroll documents such as: payroll deductions; W-2 and W-4; and garnishments, assignments, attachments. (Termination plus 7 years)
- Accident reports and claims (settled cases)

Retention periods for other documents and records.

- Time cards/sheets - 2 years
- Employee personnel records - 6 years after separation
- W-4 forms - 7 years
- Employment applications - 3 years
- I-9s (after termination) - 1 year
- Petty Cash (vouchers) - 3 Years
- Budget Files - 5 Years
- Workers compensation claims, files - 11 years
- Ministerial discipline documents - original returned credentials are to be immediately sent to the General Secretary with supporting documentation. Copies may be maintained by the district at its discretion
- Laity Discipline - any issues related to sexual misconduct with a minor should be immediately reported to appropriate child protection services and also to the General Secretary's Office. All other records should be maintained for 6 years after the layperson is no longer a member.
- Ministerial Applications - 6 years after ordination or termination of pursuit of credential. (Note: if credential pursuit ends due to discipline or discovery of misconduct, treat file as a ministerial discipline issue)