

GOVERNMENT DOCUMENTS

A WORD
ABOUT
ETHICS

OFFICIAL RECORDS

What are official records?

- Official records are recorded information—regardless of form or character (including in digital or electronic form)—that are made or received by the Department under Federal law or in connection with the transaction of public business, and preserved as evidence of the Department’s activities or because they contain information of value.

What are “nonrecords?”

- “Nonrecords” are documentary materials that pertain to official business but lack record value, such as extra copies of documents and library reference materials. A copy may be a record if intended as a record or filed separately for official purposes.

How should records and nonrecords be used?

- Both records and nonrecords are Government property; you cannot use them for personal or unauthorized purposes or removed them without authority. Official records can only be destroyed as authorized under the General Records Schedule published by the NARA or by a Department Records Officer.

PERSONAL PAPERS

What are “personal papers?”

- Personal papers are materials of a private, nonpublic character pertaining solely to an individual’s private affairs and which do not relate to, or affect, the Department’s business, including:
 - papers created before someone enters Government service;
 - private materials brought into, created, or received in the office that were not created or received in the course of transacting Government business; and
 - outside or off-duty work-related personal papers that are not used in the transaction of Government business, or not expected to affect agency business.

How should I maintain personal papers?

- You should not intermingle personal papers with official records.

General Law Division – Office of the General Counsel – United States Department of
Commerce

202-482-5391 – www.commerce.gov/os/ogc/general-law-division

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