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## E-MAIL ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS

Are e-mail archiving solutions recordkeeping solutions? E-mail messages and their attachments, like other corporate records, are subject to the Public Records Act, 2005. This fact sheet provides advice for IT managers and records managers in public offices and local authorities about maintaining and storing e-mails as records.

### 1 > WHAT DOES THE PUBLIC RECORDS ACT 2005 MEAN FOR E-MAIL MANAGEMENT?

The Public Records Act 2005 aims to enable government to be held accountable by:

- > ensuring that full and accurate records of the affairs of central and local government are created and maintained; and
- > providing for the preservation of, and public access to, records of long-term value.

E-mail and other electronic communications technologies are used by all organisations to conduct business. To maintain complete, accurate and reliable evidence of business transactions, it is essential to manage all correspondence, including e-mail, as records. The most successful method of doing this is to ensure that organisations are creating, storing and managing their records within a recordkeeping framework or system.

### 2 > IS E-MAIL MANAGEMENT COVERED BY THE ELECTRONIC RECORDKEEPING SYSTEMS STANDARD (ERKSS)?

The key requirements of electronic recordkeeping systems are outlined in Archives New Zealand's ERKS Standard. E-mail recordkeeping involves not only capturing e-mail as a record but also capturing the metadata of business context, so that an e-mail can be subsequently retrieved as a reliable and trustworthy record of business activity. Characteristics of a recordkeeping system include functionality that ensures:

- > the e-mail maintains any contextual links with related documents, especially attachments;
- > the e-mail has its recordkeeping metadata (metadata about the business action / transaction, the agents involved in the action and links to associated records) captured and this information is authentic, inviolable, searchable and retrievable;
- > the e-mail can be re-titled to more accurately reflect its context or content, e.g. by applying naming conventions;
- > the e-mail can be grouped according to a classification scheme as necessary and/or with records of a similar retention period; and
- > retention and disposal actions can be defined and implemented at the point of capture, if necessary.

### 3 > WHAT ARE 'E-MAIL ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS'?

Many e-mail archiving solutions, sometimes referred to as 'vault storage' or 'black-box' e-mail retention systems, may enable e-mail to be transferred from an organisation's primary e-mail server to another storage system. The term 'archiving' is being used in the 'Information Technology' sense as an email storage facility rather than the recordkeeping definition; the ongoing management and preservation of records. E-mail storage systems may offer the following advantages for users:

- > improved control over e-mail (including audit trails) and managing the risk of inappropriate or unauthorised e-mail use;



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- > filtering and automated or semi-automated 'archiving' or classification;
  - > secure, tamper-proof copies;
  - > ease of discovery for litigation or Official Information Act purposes;
  - > improved disaster recovery and business continuity;
  - > cost effectiveness;
  - > reduced storage requirements – elimination of copies of the same message (and attachments) in multiple in boxes; and
  - > potential for reduced load on servers.
- > may be problems protecting personal privacy, especially if personal e-mail use is permitted;
  - > it is very difficult to apply naming conventions to the message to better reflect the content, or implement classification schema (making retrieval more difficult);
  - > there is lack of control and/or appraisal (selection process) for the records that are captured into the system; and
  - > it is difficult to assign different retention periods according to the different activities documented in the messages.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of all e-mail users within an organisation to ensure that full and accurate records of their business activities are maintained. 'Vault storage' may not permit users to control which e-mails are captured as records.

#### 4 > DO 'E-MAIL ARCHIVING SOLUTIONS' MEET ERKSS REQUIREMENTS?

Many of these advantages are worthwhile benefits in an agency's overall information technology infrastructure. However, e-mail archiving solutions are not always suitable for managing e-mail as records. The functionality of e-mail archiving solutions is such that:

- > automated classification of content is not foolproof – messages are not reliably linked to their business context;
- > it is difficult to differentiate between business critical, informational, personal, and unsolicited commercial e-mails;
- > records communicated via e-mail are separated from related records in other formats and systems;
- > generally, only the sender, recipient or an administrator can access the messages, which means that other staff do not know of the existence of potentially key organisational information;
- > where more widespread access is available, there

#### 5 > WHAT DOES ARCHIVES NEW ZEALAND RECOMMEND?

E-mail archiving solutions or e-mail storage products do provide benefits for organisations, but they are not a substitute for a recordkeeping system. If government organisations use 'e-mail archiving solutions' these systems should be considered information *storage* solutions only, not *recordkeeping* solutions.

To meet the recordkeeping requirements of the Public Records Act organisations need to manage their information, including e-mails, within a recordkeeping framework that meets the Public Records Act and ERKSS requirements. A recordkeeping system will provide a framework for capturing, maintaining and providing access to evidence of transactions over time and implementation of retention and disposal regimes. An electronic recordkeeping system is not just an information storage facility it actively manages your information.

For further information, see also:

- > Fact Sheet F10 *E-mail*
- > Standard S5 *Electronic Recordkeeping Systems Standard*.