

**UNITED STATES NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20555
July 31, 2020**

**INFORMATION AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT GUIDELINE NO. 2016-03
INSTANT MESSAGING**

ADDRESSEES

All NRC employees and contractors.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this guideline is to inform all staff and contractors of their recordkeeping responsibilities when using instant messaging, such as MS Teams Chat, which allows staff to engage in written conversations of a transitory, or temporary, basis.

BACKGROUND

On February 23, 2015, the ability to use instant messaging was released to all NRC staff and contractors. Due to the prevalent use of instant messaging for the creation of transitory records that do not require long-term or permanent retention, as well as for personal, non-business communications amongst employees, the NRC is implementing a 10-day retention period for instant messages. Transitory records are routine records of short term value that do not document or otherwise provide evidence of agency decision-making.¹

IMPACT

- For instant messages that are transitory records, no action is required. Each individual instant message (i.e., “chat”) within a conversation will be deleted, on a rolling basis, when that individual message is 10 days old, and will no longer be available.
- If an instant message documents or otherwise provides evidence of agency decision-making, the instant message is not a transitory record and must be retained appropriately as described below.

STAFF ACTION

- Instant messages that document agency business and decision-making are federal records and must be preserved accordingly. Staff can do so by copying and pasting all relevant portions of the conversation evidencing agency business into an email that is then sent to all participants in the chat. This will ensure that the instant messages evidencing agency business are not lost due to the automatic 10-day deletion policy.

¹ The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) authorizes agencies to destroy transitory records when no longer needed for business use or according to an agency predetermined time period. For more information on what constitutes a “transitory” record, see NARA General Records Schedule 5.2, Item 010, “Transitory Records” at <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/grs/grs05-2.pdf>, and “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about Transitory Records in Electronic Messages” at <https://www.archives.gov/records-mgmt/grs/grs05-2-faqs-emsq>.

Staff should then consult the NRC Comprehensive Records Disposition Schedule (NUREG-0910, Revision 4)² to further determine whether the email must be added into ADAMS as a permanent NRC record, depending on the nature of the record. If the employee knows at the time of creation that a chat conversation must be added to ADAMS (e.g., added to a case file or licensing docket), the employee need not take the additional step of creating an email version of the chat conversation, and may instead immediately enter the chat conversation into ADAMS as follows:

- Open a blank Word document.
 - Highlight the relevant portions of the instant message conversation in MS Teams.
 - Right click and select “Copy.”
 - Switch to the Word document window.
 - Right click and select “Paste.”
 - Save the file and place in ADAMS as a record.
 - Delete local versions after it is filed in ADAMS.
- For instant messages that do not document agency business and decision-making (e.g., conversations amongst staff that relate solely to personal or private affairs), no action is required. Instant messages will be deleted on a rolling basis in 10 days. Employees are also free to delete such messages prior to the 10-day automatic deletion.
 - Contact the Digitization, Processing, and Records Branch (DPRB) with any questions related to recordkeeping requirements of instant messages.

CONTACT: IT/IMPolicy.Resource@nrc.gov

Margie Janney
NRC Records Officer

² <https://www.nrc.gov/docs/ML0513/ML051390495.pdf>