

**NORTHERN PLAINS AREA
Policy Memorandum**

DATE:	May 2, 2011
SUBJECT:	Files Management
NUMBER:	PM-11-001
EFFECTIVE DATE:	Immediately Until Replaced or Superseded

1. Purpose

To create a standardized files management system for the Northern Plains Area that enhances efficiency in file handling, control, maintenance, and disposition. The system provides a uniform method for filing and maintaining records.

2. Primary File Categories

The file categories create a subject-based system in which a selected number of subject titles are arranged alphabetically. The categories include:

Asset Management	Personnel
Budget & Finance	Personal Property
Contracting/Acquisition	Research Project Documentation
Communication	Safety
Information Technology	Technology Transfer
Outreach/Diversity/Equal Opportunity	Travel

Each file category can be further subdivided to units closely related by subject matter, person or organization, transaction, place, thing, or event.

3. Preparation of File Folder Labels

Proper labeling is a very important part of a well managed and efficient filing system. Labels act as signposts, speeding the filing and retrieving of records.

File Folders: The folder will contain three labels.

1. Primary Category
2. Name of the file
3. Period covered by the folder and disposition authority

Placement of Labels: There are three areas on the folder tab where a label may be placed: the left-hand corner, center, and the right-hand corner.

Left-hand corner. This label will contain the folder category in the following format:

BUDGET & FINANCE Period-End Estimates
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Center. This label will contain the subject matter such as the person, organization, transaction, place, thing, or event.

Grain, Forage & Bioenergy Research Unit
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Right-hand corner. This label will contain the time period covered by the folder and the disposition information.

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4. Placement of Paper

The paper document will be placed left-edge down in the folder, facing the front of the drawer. Always file the most recently dated material in the front of the folder.

5. Color Coding (Optional)

Color coding the files is not mandatory. If you choose to color code the files, it is recommended that the file colors stay consistent throughout the Area. Different color coding options include using color on: labels, drawer labels, font, file folders, hanging folders, classification folders, guide cards, and tabs. Suggested colors include:

Asset Management – *Purple*
Budget/Finance – *Green*
Contracting/Acquisition – *Yellow*
Communication – *Burgundy*
Information Technology – *Teal*
Outreach/Diversity/EEO/CR – *Brown*

Personnel – *Blue*
Research Project Documentation - *Black*
Personal Property – *Pink*
Safety – *Orange*
Technology Transfer – *Gray*
Travel - *Red*

6. Disposition

Majority of records are cut off-off by fiscal year or calendar year. To help determine disposition information, you can reference the NPA Files Management and Retention Guide which can be found at the NPA Area Property Office webpage:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Main/docs.htm?docid=16584>

7. Point of Contact

For further information, please contact the Area Records Management Officer at 970-492-7005.

/s/
W.H. BLACKBURN
Area Director
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