

Your guide to electronic document retention

Technology has revolutionised the way we store documents. Companies are now able to scan documents and store them electronically. This guide is designed to help reassure you that you will still be meeting compliance guidelines, should you choose Invu.

BSI BIP 0008 (Parts 1,2 and 3) is the current British Standard document relating to **'Legal Admissibility and Evidential Weight of Information Stored Electronically'**. It sets a benchmark for business procedures in order to achieve best practice in storing and retaining documents.

Criteria for documentation retention and how Invu can help

As stated in BSI BIP 0008 (Parts 1,2 and 3) there are some simple criteria that need to be met when storing electronic documents. Invu meets these guidelines.

Scanning documents

- The document needs to be retained in the format in which it was made, sent or received OR in a format which does not change the information contained within it
- The information must be readable or perceivable by any authorised individual

How Invu meets the criteria

- By scanning documents you will be converting paper documents to usable electronic files, which will be an exact electronic copy of the original
- The scanned document will be accessible and visible by an authorised individual who has access to Invu

Storing documents

- The document should not be retained beyond the duration of the business transaction associated with it except where the retention is to satisfy a legal requirement for the auditing of transactions

How Invu meets the criteria

- Documents can automatically be stored in Invu for any length of time and can be deleted or moved to an archive after a required period of time
- Electronic documents are immediately securely stored on your server

Retrieving documents

- The storage of the document must include any information that identifies the origin and destination of the document and the date, time and when it was sent or received

How Invu meets the criteria

- Invu allows you to tailor the filing fields specifically for your organisation
- Invu automatically generates the date and time that the document is created or saved into the system giving a complete audit trail
- When a document is amended, Invu records both the new and old versions labelling both clearly

Timescale for retaining business documents

Document	Period of Retention	Comments
Accounts		
Company accounts (giving information sufficient to comply with Companies Acts 1985 & 1989)	Under the Companies Act accounting records must be retained: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • for public companies for a minimum of six years from the date they are made • for private companies for a minimum of three years from the date they are made 	Best practice suggests retaining both private and public company accounts for six years from the year end Some accounting records will be required for tax purposes
Suppliers invoices*	Six years	
Suppliers credit notes*	Six years	
Purchase orders*	Three years	
* Source: University of Westminster		
Agreements and related correspondence		
Major agreements of historical significance	Permanently	
Contracts with customers, suppliers or agents	Six years after expiry or termination of the contract	Six years is generally the time limit within which proceedings founded on a contract may be brought
Licensing agreements		If the contract is executed as a deed, the limitation period is twelve years
Rental/hire purchase agreements		
Indemnities and guarantees		Actions for latent damage may be brought up to fifteen years after the damage occurs
Other agreements/contracts		

Document	Period of Retention	Comments
Banking Records		
Cheques, bills of exchange and other negotiable instruments, bank statements	Three years for limited companies Six years for public companies	
Instructions to banks	Six years after ceasing to be effective	
Donations and subscription records		
Donations granted and related correspondence	Six years	
Deeds of covenant	Six years after the last payment made but up to twelve years if any payments are still outstanding or there is any dispute regarding the Deed	
Subscription records	Three years after cessation of membership	
Employee Records		
Staff personal records	Six years after employment ceases	Health & safety records may need to be kept longer
Personal records of organisations important executives	Six years	Records may be kept longer for historical purposes
Applications for jobs-where the candidate is unsuccessful	Guidelines suggest three months after notifying the unsuccessful candidate	The Discrimination Acts 1975 and 1986 and the Race Relations Act 1976 recommend six months There is a one year limitation for defamation actions under the Limitations Act
Payrolls/wages	Six years from the year end for companies Five years after 31 January of the following year of assessment for unincorporated entities	
Expense accounts	Six years	
Labour agreements	Best practice suggests ten years	
Works Council minutes	Best practice suggests permanently	
Sickness records	Three years after the end of each tax year for Statutory Sick Pay purposes	
Accident books	Three years from the date of each entry	
Health and safety records	Three years	Personal injury actions must generally be commenced within three years of the injury. However, for industrial injuries not capable of detection with that period (for example, in relation to asbestos) the time periods may be substantially extended The time periods are extended in relation to employees exposed to hazardous substances

Document	Period of Retention	Comments
Insurance		
Policies	Three years after lapse	
Claims correspondence	Three years after settlement	
Employer's liability insurance certificate	Forty years	
Accident reports and relevant correspondence	Three years after settlement	
Property		
Deeds of title	Permanently or until property disposed of	
Leases	Fifteen years after expiry	
Tax Supporting documentation for tax returns		
VAT	Six years	Note that where there is an enquiry into a tax return, records should be retained until the enquiry is complete
Corporation Tax	Six years from the end of the period for which the company may be required to deliver a company tax return	
PAYE	For PAYE records not required to be sent to the Inland Revenue, not less than three years after the end of the tax year to which they relate	Note however that payroll records should be kept for five to six years
Unincorporated businesses and individuals	Five years from 31 January of the year following the year of assessment	
Technical and Research		
Records and reports	Twelve to fifteen years after requirements have ended	
Drawings and other data	Twelve to fifteen years after requirements have ended	

SOURCE:

- Information from Institute of Chartered Secretaries and Administrators from www.ncvo-vol.org.uk

Industry specific guidelines

Most industries have their own guidelines and it is advisable to check with the recognised association for each industry to obtain specific advice.

Industry	Association name	Web address
Accountancy	Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)	www.icaew.com
Architects	Royal Institute of British Architects	www.architecture.com
Construction	Construction Industry Council	www.cic.org.uk
Education	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (OFSTED)	www.ofsted.gov.uk
Food	Food and Drink Federation	www.fdf.org.uk
	Society of Food Hygiene and Technology	www.sofht.co.uk
	National Farmers Retail & Markets Association	www.farma.org.uk
Health and Social Work	British Association of Social Workers	www.basw.co.uk
	Commission for Social Care Inspection	www.csci.org.uk
Housing	National Housing Federation	www.housing.org.uk
IFA	Institute of Financial Accountants	www.ifa.org.uk
Insurance	The Association of British Insurers	www.abi.org.uk
	British Insurance Brokers Association	www.biba.org.uk
	British Insurance Law Association	www.bila.org.uk
IT and Telecoms	UK Competitive Telecommunications Association	www.ukcta.org.uk
	Intellect – representing The UK Technology Industry	www.intellectuk.org
	Business and Application Software Developers Association	www.basda.org
Legal	The Law Society	www.lawsociety.org.uk
	British Insurance Law Association	www.bila.org.uk
	Legal Practice Management Association	www.lpma.org.uk
Leisure & Tourism	Marine Leisure Association	www.marineleisure.co.uk
	British Hospitality Association	www.bha.org.uk
	The Independents Hotel Association	www.theindependents.co.uk
Local Government	The Local Government Association	www.lga.gov.uk
Manufacturing	Association of Cost Engineers	www.acoste.org.uk
Mortgages	Association of Mortgage Intermediaries	www.a-m-i.org.uk
	Council of Mortgage Lenders	www.cml.org.uk
	British Banking Association	www.bba.org.uk
	Financial Services Authority	www.fsa.gov.uk

Industry	Association name	Web address
Publishing	The Publishing Association	www.publishers.org.uk
Real Estate	The National Association of Estate Agents	www.naea.co.uk
	Property Managers Association	www.propertymanagersassociation.com
	The Association of Residential Managing Agents	www.arma.org.uk
Recruitment	The Recruitment and Employment Confederation	www.rec.uk.com
	The Association of Professional Recruitment Consultants	www.aprc.co.uk
Retail	British Retail Consortium	www.brc.org.uk
	Retail Motor Industry Federation	www.rmif.co.uk
Transport & Logistics	The Transport Association	www.trans-assoc.org.uk
	Freight Transport Association	www.fta.co.uk
	The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport in the UK	www.ciltuk.org.uk
Utilities	Energy Retail Association	www.energy-retail.org.uk

For general enquiries contact:

- Records Management Society www.rms-gb.org.uk
- The National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk
- Her Majesties Revenue and Customs (HMRC) www.hmrc.gov.uk



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