

News

Guidelines for Record Retention and Disposal Issued by the Supreme Court



In order to promote efficiency and accountability throughout all registry wings, the Supreme Court today released standards for document retention and disposal.

An oversight in the administration of administrative records was brought to light by the Apex Court.

Chief Justice of India B R Gavai stated in a statement that the number and variety of administrative records produced by various branches of the Supreme Court had significantly increased over time.

"While judicial records pertaining to case proceedings are governed by explicit provisions contained in Order LVI of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013, and further elaborated in Chapter

XXI of the Handbook on Practice and Office Procedure of the Supreme Court of India, 2017, a lacuna has persisted with respect to the management of administrative records," he stated.

The CJI went on, "This discrepancy results in uneven procedures throughout branches, which impacts the efficiency and clarity of archives. To address this, the 'Guidelines for Retention and Destruction of Records 2025' encourage efficiency, accountability, and coherence in the management of administrative records, such as institutional decisions, policy implementations, interdepartmental correspondences, audits, and interactions with external stakeholders.

CJI Gavai emphasized the significance of appropriately handling these documents for accountability and transparency as well as rules to create a logical framework.

"The methodical removal of outdated documents improves operational efficiency by reducing storage costs and speeding up data retrieval. By establishing suitable retention periods based on administrative, legal, and financial significance, the Guidelines guarantee adherence to audit and legislative requirements. They comply with national guidelines for the administration of public records.

It was said that the recommendations were the result of extensive discussions between register officials and registrars.

"I want to express my profound gratitude for the work of Pradip Y. Ladekar, the Supreme Court Registrar, who was important in the creation of these Guidelines. Throughout the procedure, his employees provided him with competent support. Additionally, he expressed gratitude to Secretary General Bharat Parashar and Officer on Special Duty S C Munghate for their leadership and direction in guiding the Registry through this significant endeavor.

Original submission notes or paper books with the signatures of the Supreme Court judges and India's chief justice must be kept forever, per the directions that have been given.

Additionally, office orders, circular files, and policy files were to be kept on file forever.

"The records' retention period will begin upon the conclusion of any arbitration, lawsuit, investigation, or audit, as applicable. Before eliminating files, cases, or records, all relevant branches will make sure that there are no ongoing legal proceedings pertaining to the subject matter of the files, cases, or documents that are being destroyed or weeded out," the

statement stated.

An alert stating that "the pendency of court case is to be sent to them as soon as the court case is received in the section" should be sent if the records of one branch or wing were related to those of another branch or records pertaining to the confidential branch.

It further said that records should only be destroyed or retained by the appropriate branches with the registrar's consent.

"Record destruction is typically done over summer vacation or on days when the court is not in session. The concerned Registrar may make a decision at the time of record destruction if a scanned copy of papers or records needs to be kept after the retention period for reasons that should be documented in writing, according to the standards.

"With effect from April 1 to March 31, financial and budget-related documents and files should be maintained separately for each financial year," it further stated. For every calendar year, from January 1 to December 31, all additional records and registers may be kept independently.