

## PHSA Office of Environmental Sustainability

### ELECTRONIC FILING TOOLKIT

#### OBJECTIVE:

The goal here is to decrease the amount of paper used in PHSA by eliminating the practice of printing out documents instead of saving them and filing them in electronic format.

#### BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Any amount of savings in paper use, however small, will have a large cumulative effect on the total savings at PHSA. One area where savings can be achieved with relative ease is through filing documents and emails electronically, instead of printing them out on paper. Follow the directions below for setting up a digital filing system on a shared drive in your department and for saving filing emails in Microsoft Outlook.

PHSA consumed 44 million sheets of paper a year. According to the EPA the average office worker uses 10,000 sheets of annually.

PHSA's paper usage equals:

- 5,664 trees
- enough water to fill 7 Olympic sized swimming pools
- enough solid waste to fill 15 garbage trucks

IMIT provides each employee at PHSA with two types of secure electronic storage. *Individual* server storage and *group* server storage. You can also archive emails within Outlook. Your local C: drive on your machine is never backed up and is not secure. Documents should never be stored on your C: drive.

#### BENEFITS:

- Documents are easily searchable and can be found quickly.  
Our servers are backed up and archived often meaning documents will never be lost. The following is the *PHSA* backup and retention schedule:
  - Daily Incremental Backup
  - Weekly Full Backup
  - Weekly Vault Backup
  - Monthly Full Backup
  - Yearly Full Backup
- More space in your work area and less clutter.
- Less paper = less fire hazard and easier cleaning and infection control.
- With digital documents you can access your files from other sites or from home.
- Reduced costs for file storage cabinets (which can be very costly - and take up space)

#### BARRIERS:

- A lack of understanding about the importance of reducing paper stands in the way of making positive changes in the amount of paper consumed.
- The perceived cost (financial and environmental) to printing a single sheet is minimal. However for the entire organization the costs are huge. Through many small steps in reducing paper consumption a large savings is gained.
- There is also a lack of training and knowledge on how to properly store and easily retrieve documents electronically. As well staff are under time constraints may feel they don't have time to learn how to e-file.
- There are various existing software systems that provide paper reports or necessitate paper backups.

- Personal behaviour, some people preferring paper copies of documents and do not trust electronic systems, as well some have difficulty reading on the screen and find it easier to read and review document on paper or print by default/habit.

## STEPS:

### HOW TO START ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT FILING:

There are two different ways to start electronic document filing which are detailed below. *Individual electronic document filing and shared server filing.*

Determine the best way to approach the issue with your department. Perhaps you need to speak with your supervisor first and let them handle it. Otherwise, you could bring it up at a staff meeting, or send out an email explaining electronic filing and offer your services to help set it up. (This will be different for different work areas)

### FOR INDIVIDUAL ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT FILING:

#### Step 1

If you are unsure where your individual server storage is speak to your supervisor or contact the IT Help Desk.

If you have not already done so, you will need to develop a electronic filing system to organize your files on the server and to make retrieval easier. This is similar to developing a proper paper filing system.

Create folders with clear labels that accurately describe what is located in each folder. You need to develop a system that works for you. Try to develop broad first level categories so you can easily group documents, this could be by:

- Document type such as: LETTERS, MEMOS, REPORTS, etc.
- Project Name: GREEN+LEADERS, PAPER REDUCTION, WASTE etc.
- Date: 2009, 2010 or MARCH, APRIL etc.

Include an ARCHIVE folder so you can store old documents/folders without having them cluttering your electronic filing system.

#### Step 2

Develop naming conventions for documents. This ensures that you can find files quickly and easily.

#### Naming Convention for Files

- Use filenames that **accurately describe the contents of the file**. This ensures that the file will be easy to locate visually, or when using the Search function.
- Keep filenames **short and concise** – abbreviate where appropriate.
- **File Duplication:** Error can be caused by accessing or editing outdated and/or duplicate versions of files. This can be prevented by ensuring that only **one copy/version** of any file is stored on the shared drive – in the appropriate folder location. A final version should contain the word **FINAL** and the **version date** in its filename.
- Include the **creation/revision date** at the end of the filename using a consistent naming convention. Example: month + day + year = July 14-08.

#### Step 3

Periodically you will need to clean out your electronic filing system. Move old documents to the archive folder and delete unneeded documents. If you have trouble setting aside time to do this, it can help to set a recurring meeting for yourself in Outlook as time for you to clean up your files.

## FOR A SHARED SERVER

If you don't have a departmental shared drive, talk to your manager or supervisor about getting one, or if you have one that is a total mess, advocate getting it cleaned up. Depending on the size and structure of your department this could be a group effort or your supervisor may nominate a specific person for this task. Cleaning up a shared drive that does not currently have any structure could potentially be a huge job depending on the size of your department, do not take it all on by yourself if you do not feel you can handle it.

### Step 1

#### Develop an electronic filing system

It becomes increasingly difficult to locate files within shared drives that do not have a proper logic model/filing system. When files cannot be located, staff members have a tendency to re-create them, often in formats reflecting their own style versus a standard format. When this occurs, the same file can be re-created and filed several times within the same share, causing duplication and issues with regards to file versions. As well, the sheer volume of outdated/redundant files increases.

Developing a proper electronic file structure is just as important as developing a structured paper filing system – neither works well if preparation and thought are not given to their development and ongoing maintenance. This includes assigning individuals to be accountable for the contents of folders on an ongoing basis. Since the shared server is to be used by all members of your department the filing system model needs to work for everyone. So ensure the logic model is clear and easy to understand. Remember what works for your individual filing system may not work for everyone.

#### File/Folder Management

- **Folder Administrators:** It is critical to assign administrators to own and manage the contents of each first level folder. This ensures that once the structure is in place, someone is responsible to monitor the contents and structure on an ongoing basis.
- **First/Second Level Folders:** It is important to create a logic model where the first and second level folders are clear and descriptive – with no deeper than four levels of sub-folders in total (including the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> levels). A user should be confident about where to find a file within those first two levels.
- **Sub-Folders:** Create folders to **group** files together under **common headings/themes** (such as with a paper filing system). One or two files in a sub-folder is not practical – unless it is absolutely necessary for some reason.
- **Annual Documentation:** To group files that are created annually, year sub-folders can be created, i.e. Annual Reports\2008 or Invoices\2009.
- **Archiving:** Include an **\_ARCHIVED folder** (the \_ floats the folder to the top of the folder list) under each first level folder. By placing old files in an \_ARCHIVED folder, working folders will contain only current working files or files that need to be retained for future reference. Old files are not deleted permanently from the \_ARCHIVED folder until an annual review.
  - On a regular basis, move any files/folders that are **outdated** or **no longer relevant**, but which **will need to be referenced in the future**, to the appropriate \_ARCHIVED folders.
  - **Annually**, the \_ARCHIVED folders should be reviewed (by team member assignment) and any items that are no longer relevant can be deleted.
- **Permissions:** Restricted permissions can be applied to confidential folders, or to restrict access to only specific users. Permissions should be applied to first level folders only.
- **File Name in Footer:** It is a good habit to add the full path and filename to the footer of shared documents, as appropriate.

## Step 2

Develop naming conventions for documents. This ensures that staff can find files quickly and easily and everyone will know what is in each document.

### Naming Convention for Files

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## Step 3

Distribute the file folder logic system and naming convention rules to all staff in your work area. Ensure they are confident in how to file documents in the correct locations. Ensure the shared drive administrators feel comfortable with managing the drive.

## Step 4

Send out regular emails reminding people about the shared drive system and encouraging its use. If staff are having difficulty filing or finding documents, offer your help to train them. Identify other issues as they arise and either work to solve them or bring it up at the next Green+Leaders meeting to look for suggestions.

Schedule periodic ‘meetings’ every six months, or once a year in Outlook, to act as work times for everyone to clean up their files. This will help to prevent the shared drive from becoming unmanageable.

## EVALUATION

Prior to initiating the tool, try to determine how much paper your department is using. This data can be found either through purchasing data (how much paper is your department buying) or from PrinterWorks (how many prints/copies are you making). As well try to get a general sense of how much space paper is taking up in your workplace and how much time people spend working with paper.

After the tool has been active for several months, review paper usage and the space requirements for paper storage and quantify what improvements have been made. How many people are using the tool? How much paper has been saved? As well, try to get a qualitative indication of the tool. What are people’s personal reactions to using less paper. Do they find it makes their work life easier? Can they find documents easier? How do they like the program? What can be improved in the future?