

Assignment 4.1: Chapter 2 Make Your Case
Medical Record Disaster Preparedness Plan

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Medical Record Disaster Preparedness Plan

Purpose:

The purpose of this plan is to guide staff concerning the everyday maintenance of paper and electronic medical records in preparation for a disaster. Secondly, this plan should assist in the possible recovery of such data and records after such a disaster to minimize patient care interruption and assist patients in accessing their records to maintain quality of care (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Plan Activation:

Implementation of this plan should be immediate and ongoing to prepare the medical records and EHR system in the event of a disaster. Paper record recovery after a disaster should begin as soon as possible to ensure the most successful recovery possible (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Record Types:

Electronic Data: Electronic data includes anything in electronic format located on network servers. Such electronic data includes electronic medical records, “financial records, human resource records, e-mail, and web page files” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Paper Files: As the EHR is progressively implemented utilizing a hybrid system, some documentation remains in a paper format. Also, other papers used in other departments are not a part of the medical record but may still need recovery (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Damage and Loss Prevention:

Electronic Data: Electronic data damage and loss prevention depend on regular back-up procedures. The IT and HIM departments are to ensure all electronic data, especially electronic medical records, are backed-up on a routine basis every 24 hours, including weekends (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). “The back-up tapes are stored in a fire and water-proof cabinet” in the office of the CIO (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). A second back-up copy should be sent to and stored at a second enterprise location once a week. This back-up is also “stored in a fire and water-proof cabinet” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). The second back-up is a last resort fail-safe. It reduces the probability of unrecoverable records due to complete destruction under the worst circumstances.

Paper Files: Most paper records are kept “in a fireproof vault when not being used” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). Purged paper records “have been put on micro-film and are stored in a...vault offsite” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). Some administrative paperwork is “stored in fireproof vaults and cabinets, but the voluminous nature of these records prevents storing all of them in such facilities” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*). Paper files as part of the current hybrid system should continue to be indexed and converted to be incorporated into the EHR. The goal is to have a complete EHR system with no paper records that could be lost or damaged in a disaster.

Disaster Recovery:

The electronic data backing-up process is vital for data recovery. The back-up tapes created daily will facilitate electronic data recovery. Patients will be able to access their medical records through the patient portal in the EHR system. If absolutely necessary under the worst circumstances, the secondary back-up and enterprise location will be utilized. The remainder of

this plan should focus on paper record recovery due to water and fire damage (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Each department should follow these steps after a disaster (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*):

- Affected departmental managers are to contact operations regarding cleanup assistance (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).
- HIM is in charge of determining the extent of the damage to paper medical records. Departmental managers are also responsible for determining the damage to papers in their respective departments. (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).
- After departmental and HIM management has finished making their determinations, they should immediately contact the CIO. If necessary, for extensive damage, the CIO and other members of the administration will consult with a restoration specialist for a more extensive damage estimation and receive recommendations for the best recovery plan (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Water Damage Recovery:

Water damage happens during flooding when papers either become entirely saturated or damp from humidity. Recovery methods of paper records from water damage include (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*):

- Air Drying: Spread out and separate papers in a dry a place. For 72 hours, dry damp records through air circulation by the methods of air conditioning and fans (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).
- Dehumidifiers: Consult with a restoration specialist about bringing dehumidifiers into the facility. If possible, leave larger quantities of damp records in their original storage area

and dry with dehumidifiers. This method can take weeks to finish (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

- Freezing: Consult with a restoration specialist about freezing, which is the best method for the worst and most extensive water damage. Papers should be separated and placed in commercial freezers in separate containers. Freezing can take months to finish (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

Fire Damage Recovery:

The recovery of paper records due to fire is less likely than other means of damage. Using fireproof storage, the fireproof vault for medical records, and offsite storage for purged records is critical to saving remaining paper records (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

- Recoverable documents damaged in a fire will pick up a smokey odor. If necessary, “dry cleaning” by a restoration specialist “may remove most...of the smoke odor” (*The University System of Georgia, 2009*).

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