Records Retention

1) **Purpose:**
   a) The purpose of this Standard Practice (SP) is to establish guidelines for the retention, storage, and disposal of records within the organization. This SP ensures compliance with legal, regulatory, and operational requirements while facilitating efficient records management.

2) **Scope:**
   a) This SP applies to all employees, departments, and divisions within the organization. It covers both physical and electronic records generated or received during the course of business activities.

3) **Definitions:**
   a) **Records**: Any documented information, regardless of format, created, received, maintained, or used by the organization in the course of its operations.
   b) **Retention Period:** The length of time records must be kept based on legal, regulatory, and operational requirements.
   c) **Disposal:** The process of securely destroying or permanently deleting records that have reached the end of their retention period.

4) **Responsibilities:**
   a) **Records Management Officer:**
      i) Develop and maintain the records retention schedule.
      ii) Provide guidance and training on records retention and disposal.
      iii) Monitor compliance with this SP and applicable regulations.
      iv) Conduct periodic audits to ensure adherence to retention policies.

   b) **Department Managers and Employees:**
      i) Understand and comply with the records retention schedule.
      ii) Identify and properly classify records generated or received.
      iii) Ensure records are stored securely and protected from unauthorized access.
      iv) Notify the Records Management Officer of any changes to records or retention requirements.

5) **Records Retention Process:**
   a) **Record Identification and Classification:**
      i) All records must be identified, classified, and assigned appropriate retention periods according to the records retention schedule.
      ii) Departments shall maintain a record inventory to document the types of records they generate or receive.

   b) **Record Storage:**
      i) **Physical Records:**
         (1) Store physical records in designated areas that are secure, clean, and protected from environmental factors that may damage them (e.g., moisture, temperature fluctuations).
         (2) Use proper labeling and indexing to ensure easy retrieval and tracking.

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(3) Implement a check-in/check-out system for records that need to be temporarily removed from storage.

ii) Electronic Records:

(1) Maintain an organized electronic filing system with appropriate access controls and security measures.
(2) Regularly back up electronic records to ensure their integrity and availability.
(3) Periodically test the restoration process for electronic backups.

6) Retention Periods:

a) Follow the records retention schedule to determine the specific retention periods for each record category.
b) Retention periods may vary based on legal, regulatory, contractual, or operational requirements.
c) Records exceeding their retention periods shall be disposed of according to the procedures outlined in Section 7.

7) Records Disposal:

a) Secure Disposal:

i) Physical Records:
ii) Shred or incinerate paper documents containing sensitive or confidential information.
iii) Dispose of non-sensitive physical records through authorized recycling or waste management services.

b) Electronic Records:

i) Permanently delete electronic records using secure erasure methods that render them unrecoverable.
ii) Follow any applicable data protection and privacy regulations when disposing of electronic records.

8) Disposal Documentation:

a) Maintain a disposal log or register that records the details of each disposed record, including the date, type of record, method of disposal, and person responsible.
b) Retain disposal documentation