

Proper Management of Personnel Documents

Personnel Files are essential for proper records management and are important for documenting employment status, performance management, discipline and other important aspects of employment.

Understanding best practices for what belongs in a personnel file and what is best to be filed elsewhere can help you to avoid sharing personal medical information or information regarding a possible protected class with managers and outside auditors needing access to personnel files.

The following table is to be used as a guideline in helping your City/Town manage personnel records. All items listed below should be kept in a locked cabinet. Consult with your City/Town Attorney or contact MMIA at 406-495-7017 if you have questions.

Main Personnel File— all employees	Medical/ADA File— if applicable— (not to be viewed by supervisor)	Payroll File—all employees	I-9 File	Safety Training File
Employment Application/Resume/Cover Letter	Worker's Compensation Information	W4	Separate from personnel file and divided by Active Employees and Terminated Employees	Safety meeting sign-in sheets & materials (i.e. toolbox talks, etc.)
Offer Letter	Medical/Dr notes	Time Sheets	Suggest keeping a binder or file folder.	Safety training sign-in sheets & materials (i.e. lockout/tagout, HAZCOM, etc.)
Signed Job Description	ADA information	Attendance Records		Task specific training sign-in sheets & materials (i.e. skid steer, mower, chain saw, etc.)
Performance Evaluations	Drug Testing Information	Garnishments/Records		
Disciplinary Documents/Letters	EEO Survey	Direct Deposit Information		
Personnel Policy Handbook Receipt		Death Warrant		
New Employee		Any other		

Orientation Checklist- signed		payroll related files		
Promotion Letters or Pay Increase Notices				
Emergency Contact (can keep in a separate file)				
Training and Development Summaries/Certificates (see comment below regarding safety training)				
Grievances from employee				

Keeping I-9 forms in two separate files (active employees and terminated employees) will help you to manage the destruction of them per the Federal retention requirements. Federal retention requirements are to keep I-9 for duration of employment. Upon termination, destroy one year after termination OR three years after initial hire date—whichever is longer.

Keeping all Safety Training records in one binder will allow you to easily provide this information to Department of Labor and Industry when audited, without having to shuffle through personnel files for such information.

Finally, all notes from investigations should be kept separate from the personnel file. Only the results of such investigations, if a form of discipline, will go into the personnel file. Security and retention of this investigation file is of utmost importance as it may be requested if an HRB or other type of claim were to present itself.