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| **CNCDA Sample Records Retention Chart[[1]](#footnote-1), [[2]](#footnote-2)** |
| **Accounting[[3]](#footnote-3) and Tax Records[[4]](#footnote-4), [[5]](#footnote-5)** |
| **Description of Record**  | **Retention Period**  | **Commences As Of ...**  |
| Accounts payable or receivable ledgers and schedules  | 7 years | Filing date of last tax return for current year |
| Audit, review, or compilation reports of accountants  | Permanently | Upon conclusion of accountant’s audit |
| Annual domestic corporate filing report | Permanently | N/A |
| Annual Inventory records  | 7 years  | After end of year in which inventory completed |
| Bank reconciliations | 2 years | End of year in which reconciliation performed |
| Bank Statements | 7 years | End of statement year |
| Bills of lading | 7 years | After date goods received and sold |
| Canceled checks – payroll and general | 8 years | End of year in which check clears |
| Canceled checks – for purchase of assets  | 5 years | After disposition of asset |
| Canceled checks – important papers (taxes, special contracts, etc.) | Permanently | N/A |
| Cash books, cash receipts  | 7 years | End of year in which books closed |
| Charts of accounts  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Credit card, merchant transaction records  | 6 years (Check merchant agreement and issuer security rules for other requirements)  | Date of transaction  |
| Credit memos  | 5 years  | After year issued.  |
| Duplicate deposit slips  | 7 years  | After end of year in which deposit reconciled |
| Expense analysis, expense distribution schedules  | 6 years  | After year in which reports created |
| Financial contribution reports  | 7 years  | After contribution made  |
| Financial statements  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Fixed asset contracts and equipment leases and related correspondence  | 6 years  | After later of year in which contract (or warranty) expires or year final tax return filed taking depreciation or expense deduction |
| Fixed asset records and depreciation schedules  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Flooring statements  | 6 years  | After statement closing date  |
| Form 8300 filings  | 5 years[[6]](#footnote-6)  | Date of filing  |
| General ledgers  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Internal audit reports  | 6 years  | After completion of internal audit (copies should be included in accountant's audit, review, or compilation report file)  |
| Journals, original  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Notes receivable schedules  | 7 years  | After year in which all notes on schedule are paid in full |
| Payroll records, withholding tax records and worksheets  | 7 years  | After year in which prepared |
| Petty cash vouchers  | 3 years  | After year in which prepared |
| Purchase orders  | 7 years  | After year in which issued; one copy is sufficient |
| Receiving sheets  | 4 years  | After year in which items received |
| Report of sales books (legacy)  | 7 years  | After year in which book closed |
| Sales commission reports  | 10 years (recommended) 7 years (mandatory)[[7]](#footnote-7)   | N/A  |
| Tax elections (such as LIFO or S Corporation status)  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Tax returns  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Trial balances and schedules  | 6 years  | After year in which final return filed for period covered by trial balance |
| **Dealership Operations** |
| **Description of Record**  | **Retention Period**  | **Commences As Of ...**  |
| Credit applications and all related documents where sale is made.  | 10 years (recommended) 7 years (mandatory)[[8]](#footnote-8)  | After year in which credit application completed  |
| Credit applications and all related documents where no sale made.  | 5 years (recommended) 25 months (mandatory)[[9]](#footnote-9)  | After year in which credit application completed |
| Customer files, deal jackets, vehicle contracts and leases, service contracts, buyers guide (if applicable).  | 10 years (recommended) 7 years (mandatory)[[10]](#footnote-10)  | After consummation of customer's lease or contract |
| Demo agreement and records  | 6 years  | After end of year in which vehicle disposed of  |
| Emails  | Retention Period Varies[[11]](#footnote-11) | N/A  |
| Grey market imports, certificate of conformity-related documents  | 8 years  | After year in which sold  |
| Invoices, from vendors other than for vehicles  | 7 years | After end of year in which paid or resolved |
| Invoices, for vehicles  | 6 years  | N/A  |
| Odometer disclosures (including copy of odometer disclosures on title).  | Permanently (recommended)  5 years (mandatory)  | After disclosure given or received  |
| Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) | 30 years[[12]](#footnote-12) | Duration of use plus 30 years after destruction/discontinuation of use |
| Parts sales slips, parts invoices  | 6 years  | After year in which sold  |
| Rental agreements  | 7 years  | After vehicle returned  |
| Repair order check sheets  | 4 years[[13]](#footnote-13)  | After year work completed |
| Repair orders, office copy and hard copy  | 4 years[[14]](#footnote-14)  | After repairs completed |
| Scrap and salvage, records of disposal, non-toxic  | 4 years  | After year in which disposed |
| Service contracts, extended warranties  | 10 years  | At signing  |
| Toxic materials, waste oil, record of proper disposal.  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Towing records  | 4 years (recommended) 3 years (mandatory)  | After date in which dealership took possession of the vehicle[[15]](#footnote-15) |
| Vehicle registration correspondence  | 6 years  | After current year  |
| Vouchers for payments to vendors, employees (e.g., travel and expense)  | 8 years[[16]](#footnote-16)  | After year in which final return filed taking such items as expenses  |
| Data collected when originating motor vehicle ignition keys  | 2 years  | After key is made |
| **Employee Records** |
| **Description of Record**  | **Retention Period**  | **Commences As Of ...**  |
| Drug tests  | 1,2,3 or 5 years (varies)[[17]](#footnote-17)  | Varies  |
| Employee attendance records  | 6 years  | After the end of employment  |
| Employment application demographic information | 2 years[[18]](#footnote-18) | After receipt of application |
| Employee exposure records  | 30 years[[19]](#footnote-19)  | Duration of employment plus 30 years  |
| Employee health records  | 30 years  | After the end of employment[[20]](#footnote-20)  |
| Employment applications, personnel files  | 4 years[[21]](#footnote-21)  | After end of year in which employment terminated, permanently if any dispute involved  |
| Garnishment records  | 6 years  | After year in which garnishment is completed  |
| Insurance records (for employees)  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| I-9s | 3 years after the date of hire or 1 year after the date of termination, whichever time period is longer | Varies |
| Leave Records for Family and Medical Leave Act[[22]](#footnote-22)  | Mandatory: Later of 3 years from the event or 4 years from termination[[23]](#footnote-23) Recommended: Later of 4 years from the event or 5 years from termination | Varies  |
| Retirement and pension records  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Time books, cards, flagsheets  | 10 years  | After year in which prepared  |
| Training manuals  | 4 years  | After year in which manual completely discontinued or replaced (retain permanently if a copy is not available from other sources)  |
| Unemployment Payroll Records | 4 years[[24]](#footnote-24) | After date the contributions to which they relate come due, or date the contributions are paid, whichever is later |
| Wage rates, job classifications | 3 years[[25]](#footnote-25) | After the end of employment |
| Worker’s Compensation Claims  | 10 years  | After illness  |
| **Insurance Records** |
| **Description of Record**  | **Retention Period**  | **Commences As Of ...**  |
| Incident reports prepared for insurance claims  | 6 years  | Later of (a) final resolution of claims / investigations, if any, or (b) filing date of last tax return for years where company books were affected by accident  |
| Claims register, or other record system that proves whether a claim was received or not  | 7 years  | After last year covered by particular register or group of records |
| Insurance policies, general liability, garage keepers, E&O, D&O, and correspondence  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Insurance policies, single vehicle  | 6 years  | After disposal of vehicle  |
| Reports of occupational injuries and illnesses  | 5 years[[26]](#footnote-26)  | Following the end of the year to which they relate  |
| **Legal Records** |
| **Description of Record**  | **Retention Period**  | **Commences As Of ...**  |
| Consent, received in writing from consumers to contact via phone, text message, etc.  | Permanently | N/A  |
| Construction contracts, blueprints, plans, occupancy permits, environmental remediation papers  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Corporate, LLC, or partnership stock or ownership records: stock ledgers, transfer registers, stubs showing stock issues, records of options, etc.   | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Daily operating control  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Data breach notifications to consumers  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Data Subject Requests | 24 months | After date of response |
| Deeds, mortgages, bills of sale  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| DMV, BAR, and other business licenses and related correspondence  | Permanently  | N/A  |
|  |  |  |
| Environmental testing, compliance, or remediation paperwork  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Facilities tests and resulting documents for health, safety, disability, or other laws  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Flooring agreements  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Franchise agreements, dealer agreements  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Government contracts  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Lawsuit files  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Minute books  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| OSHA Postings  | 5 years  | After posting  |
| Press releases  | 7 years  | After released  |
| Safety reports, Cal/OSHA and otherwise  | 10 years   | After date of incident or inspection |
| Telemarketing compliance materials (internal do-not-call records, national do-not-call downloads, etc.)  | 2 years (mandatory)[[27]](#footnote-27)5 years (recommended) | After year in which prepared or obtained  |
| Tradename, trademark, or patent registrations  | Permanently  | N/A  |
| Union agreements  | Permanently  | N/A  |

1. This document is meant to serve as a general informational guideline for the retention of many records and is not intended as legal advice. Before utilizing this or any other records retention chart, seek competent legal counsel familiar with your specific situation, as records retention periods may be affected by different factual situations. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Records retention is discussed in greater depth in various CNCDA publications, including the Dealership operations Guide (Chapter 13), Employment Law Manual (Chapter 2), Service Drive Compliance Manual (Chapter 4), F&I Compliance Manual (Chapters 6, 8, and 15), and the CCPA Handbook (Section VII). These manuals are accessible on CNCDA Comply. ([Click here](https://www.cncda.org/publications/comply-dashboard/)) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Period of Limitations Table (Table 3); IRS Publication 583 (January 2021); 1 California Legal Forms – Transaction Guide § 1E.130 (2021); I.R.C. § 6501 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. I.R.C. § 6501 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. While the IRS recommends retaining documents related to a return for 3 years after filing for most tax payers, there are some instances where longer retentions periods are necessary for these documents. See: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/how-long-should-i-keep-records>. CNCDA offers conservative guidance based on the longest requirement contemplated. Please be sure to discuss any changes to retention periods for tax documents with competent counsel and/or a tax expert. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/irs-form-8300-reference-guide [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Period of Limitations Table (Table 3); IRS Publication 583 (January 2021); 1 California Legal Forms – Transaction Guide § 1E.130 (2021); I.R.C. § 6501 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. California Civil Code § 2984.5 requires retention of 7 years or length of contract, whichever is longer. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. 12 CFR 202.12(b) [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. California Civil Code § 2984.5 requires retention of 7 years or length of contract, whichever is longer [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. As a best practice, dealerships are encouraged to only keep emails as long as they are necessary. However, this requires training employees to properly categorize emails and to vary retention periods for each category. As an alternative, dealers can adopt a longer fixed retention period for all emails (e.g., 5 years), with the directive that employees permanently save certain high-value emails (e.g., emails regarding litigation, government investigations, audits, etc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. 8 CCR 3204 et. seq. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. California Business and Professions Code § 9884.11, 16 CCR 3358 requires 3 year retention, however CNCDA recommends 4 years to account for the statute of limitations for most civil lawsuits [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. California Business and Professions Code § 9884.11, 16 CCR 3358 requires 3 year retention, however CNCDA recommends 4 years to account for the statute of limitations for most civil lawsuits [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. California Vehicle Code section 22513.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. 1 California Legal Forms – Transaction Guide § 1E.130 (2021) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. 49 CFR § 40.333. Retention period varies depending on the purpose of the test, whether it was positive or negative, and whether the test is from a previous employer. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. 2 CCR § 11013 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. 8 CCR 3204(d)(1)(A) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. 29 CFR 1910.1020 [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. California Government Code § 12946In the event an action is commenced against the employer, then the employer must keep the records the later of: 1) when the statute of limitations has run; or when the matter has been fully disposed of in the courts. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Relating to leave taken by FMLA eligible employees (e.g., available from time records, requests for leave, copies of notices given to or received from employee as required under FMLA, records of any dispute regarding leave, premium payments of employee benefits, etc.) [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. 29 CFR § 825.500. See also: <https://webapps.dol.gov/elaws/whd/fmla/8b6.aspx> [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. 22 CCR 1085-2(c) [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. California Labor code § 1197.5(e) [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. 8 CCR 14300.33; 8 CCR 14300.44 [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. 11 CCR § 999.317; <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-telemarketing-sales-rule#records> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)