

Office of Information Affairs

Emails and Capstone Quick Guide

In accordance with the Federal Records Act (FRA), [Public Law 113-187](#), and a joint memorandum between the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) known as M-19-21 or M-23-07: Transition to Electronic Records, the United States Department of Agriculture has a legal obligation to manage its email as federal records.

The Capstone approach, introduced by NARA and approved for use at USDA, is an approach to managing email records, to simplify how retention is applied to electronic email records based on an individual's role.

USDA uses the Capstone approach to manage email for the agency. The Capstone approach includes high level officials, whose email is a permanent record, as well as all other email accounts, which are scheduled by the role of the person according to GRS 6.1. Capstone applies to anyone who creates, receives, and handles federal records, including contractors and sub-contractors.

To meet business needs, USDA has implemented Capstone using two retentions:

1. High Level/Capstone Officials: permanent retention. Emails of Capstone Officials are transferred to the legal custody of the National Archives after 15 years.
2. Non-Capstone Accounts: a 7-year temporary retention. Emails of non-Capstone Officials are eligible for destruction after 7 years.

Capstone Officials are generally responsible for agency, program policy and mission-related actions. These email records will eventually be accessioned to NARA for permanent preservation.

Capstone is flexible; it allows for various implementation approaches, such as:

- ✓ The systematic transfer of email accounts scheduled as permanent to the National Archives.
- ✓ The systematic disposal of entire email accounts scheduled as temporary.
- ✓ Individual emails to be categorized as permanent, regardless of Capstone status.

For any questions, contact the Departmental Records Program:

Departmental Records Officer (DRO) Beatriz Collazo, at Beatriz.Collazo@usda.gov, or USDADepartmentalRecords@usda.gov.