



Dear Clients and Friends,

It's a shame that shredding documents – of every sort – is becoming the rule rather than the exception. But, the risks of information being abused are too great.

There is a lot of attention, and rightly so, on electronic theft of documents and identification information. But, often one only has to look in the trash to find valuable data.

So, shredding documents should become part of the routine in business and at home.

Have a safe and happy holiday season!

*Sincerely yours,
Jim Lill, CEO*

Tips on Shredding Documents

January often brings renewed passion to organize records in anticipation of tax filings. The decision on what records to keep and how to discard unneeded ones can be confounding.

The need to maintain confidentiality of documents is often a matter of law as well as security. HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996, requires secure use, storage and disposal of health information. The Gramm-Leach Bliley Act, another federal law, includes provisions to protect consumers' personal financial information.

Identity theft and theft of confidential and proprietary corporate information are increasingly common. Reports suggest that confidential and private information is often easily found – right in the dumpster!

Here are some tips on protecting information:

1. Putting something in the trash does not provide protection. The Supreme Court has ruled that Americans do not have a right to privacy when it comes to their trash.

Many times garbage bins are on public property – further diluting any expectations of privacy.

2. Establish a document shredding policy. Some documents must be maintained for a specific timeframe. A retention policy should be established based on the type and use of a document.
3. Shred documents according to the retention policy. Deviations from the policy may appear suspicious, especially if a company is about to be sued.
4. Consider shredding documents that could help the competition. This includes customer lists, pricing information, strategic planning documents and internal memos of a business-sensitive nature.
5. If in doubt, consider whether you would want that information made public if it was about you. If the answer is yes, shred it.

Documents with Social Security numbers and financial account numbers should be shredded.

Ask us about free COBRA, FSA and FMLA administration!

The Advisor Advantage