

ELECTRONIC MEDIA DESTRUCTION

Patient information media should be destroyed/disposed of using a method that ensures the patient information cannot be recovered or reconstructed. Appropriate methods for destroying/disposing of media are outlined in the following table.

Medium	Recommendation
Audiotapes	Methods for destroying/disposing of audiotapes include recycling (tape over) or pulverizing.
Computerized Data/ Hard Disk Drives	Methods of destruction/disposal should destroy data permanently and irreversibly. Methods may include overwriting data with a series of characters or reformatting the disk (destroying everything on it). Deleting a file on a disk does not destroy the data, but merely deletes the filename from the directory, preventing easy access of the file and making the sector available on the disk so it may be overwritten. Total data destruction does not occur until the back-up tapes have been overwritten.
Computer Data/ Magnetic Media	Methods may include overwriting data with a series of characters or reformatting the tape (destroying everything on it). Total data destruction does not occur until the back-up tapes have been overwritten. Magnetic degaussing will leave the sectors in random patterns with no preference to orientation, rendering previous data unrecoverable.
Computer Diskettes	Methods for destroying/disposing of diskettes include reformatting, pulverizing, or magnetic degaussing.
Laser Disks	Disks used in "write once-read many" (WORM) document imaging cannot be altered or reused, making pulverization an appropriate means of destruction/disposal.
Microfilm/ Microfiche	Methods for destroying/disposing of microfilm or microfiche include recycling and pulverizing.
PHI Labeled Devices, Containers, Equipment, Etc.	Reasonable steps should be taken to destroy or de-identify any PHI information prior to disposal of this medium. Removing labels or incineration of the medium would be appropriate.
Paper Records	Paper records should be destroyed/disposed of in a manner that leaves no possibility for reconstruction of information. Appropriate methods for destroying/disposing of paper records include: burning, shredding, pulping, and pulverizing.
Videotapes	Methods for destroying/disposing of videotapes include recycling (tape over) or pulverizing.