Data Retention Policy Template for Dealerships

> **How to use it.** Replace everything in [brackets] with your store's own details, and change any line that doesn't fit. Fill it in with your controller, your F&I and service directors and whoever runs IT, then write each period on the schedule. **This template is not legal advice, and it leaves every retention period blank on purpose, so set yours with your attorney and outside CPA.** Ask your attorney which state laws apply in each state where you have a store, which exceptions to name under line 3.3, and how legal holds (section 5) should work. Ask your CPA about the tax record periods.

Dealership name _____ Effective date _____

1 What this covers

1.1 This policy covers every record [Dealership Name] creates or receives, on paper, in any system, on any device, and at any vendor that holds it for us.

1.2 The policy owner is [name, title]. Questions about keeping or destroying a record go to [name, phone].

1.3 When a law, a regulation or a contract sets a different period, we follow the longer one unless counsel says otherwise.

2 Owners

2.1 Every record type in the schedule has an owner, named by title.

2.2 The owner knows where every copy lives, including copies at vendors.

2.3 Nothing is destroyed early without the owner's approval, and nothing on legal hold is destroyed at all.

3 The retention schedule

3.1 We keep each record for the period in the schedule, then destroy it the way section 6 says.

3.2 [Policy owner] sets each period with counsel and our outside CPA, as a number of days, months or years, never "as needed."

3.3 Customer information we haven't used to serve that customer in two years is destroyed, unless the schedule names a reason to keep it.

3.4 A new type of record goes on the schedule before we start collecting it.

Rules that already set a period

FTC Safeguards Rule. 16 CFR 314.4(c)(6) calls for disposing of customer information "no later than two years after the last date the information is used" to serve the customer, unless a business, legal or practical reason says to keep it.

Regulation B. For a dealer acting as a creditor, 12 CFR 202.12(b) says to keep consumer credit applications and the records used to evaluate them for 25 months after notifying the applicant of action taken. Business credit has shorter periods.

IRS. The IRS asks a business to keep a copy of every Form 8300 it files, with its supporting documents, "for at least five years from the date filed," and employment tax records for at least 4 years after the tax is due or paid, whichever is later.

Every other period on the schedule is the store's choice, set with counsel and your CPA. State law can add its own.

The retention schedule

Section 3. Write each period on its row. heliontechnologies.com/dealership-data-retention-policy-template/

The record	Where copies live	How long, and who decides	How it's destroyed
Deal jackets and credit applications	The paper jacket in [file room], the DMS, lender portals and [scanning or e-contracting vendor].	[F&I director], with counsel. If the store acts as a creditor, Regulation B sets at least 25 months for consumer credit applications. Period _____	Cross-cut shredding for paper. Deletion in each system and at each vendor, confirmed in writing.
Service repair orders	The DMS, [service scheduling or texting vendor] and printed copies in [service office].	[Service director], with counsel. Ask whether your manufacturer's warranty terms set a period. Period _____	Shredding for paper. A purge in the DMS, run the way your DMS provider tells you.
Email	Microsoft 365 or [email system], mailboxes of people who've left, and [archive vendor].	[IT or operations manager], with counsel. A legal hold overrides the period. Period _____	A retention setting that deletes on schedule. Former employees' mailboxes go when their period ends.
Call recordings	[Phone system vendor]'s cloud and [BDC or call tracking vendor].	[Sales or BDC manager], with counsel. Write the number of days down. Period _____	An auto-delete setting at each vendor, confirmed in writing.
Security camera video	The recorder on site and [camera vendor]'s cloud.	[General manager], with counsel. Footage tied to an open claim is held. Period _____	The recorder overwrites on schedule. Its drives are wiped or destroyed when it's replaced.
HR and payroll files	[Payroll or HR vendor], the locked HR file and the controller's office.	[Controller], with counsel and your CPA. The IRS says at least 4 years for employment tax records. Period _____	Shredding for paper. Deletion at the vendor when the period or the contract ends.
Backups	[Backup vendor or cloud], the backup device on site, and old drives or tapes.	[IT or operations manager]. A deleted record can live on in backups until they age out, so write that period down too. Period _____	Versions expire on schedule. Old drives and tapes are wiped or destroyed, with a certificate when a vendor does it.
[Other record]		Period _____	

4 Where records live, vendors included

4.1 The schedule lists every system, room and vendor that holds a copy of each type of record.

4.2 Vendor contracts say how long the vendor keeps our data, and how it's returned or deleted when the contract ends.

4.3 At the end of a period or a contract, we ask each vendor to confirm the deletion in writing.

4.4 Records never go to personal email, personal cloud accounts or personal phones.

5 Legal holds

5.1 When we expect a lawsuit, audit, investigation or claim, [name] puts a written hold on the records involved.

5.2 A hold stops all destruction of those records, including automatic deletion in email, phone, camera and backup systems.

5.3 Only [counsel or name] lifts a hold.

6 How records are destroyed

6.1 Paper goes in [locked shred bins] and is cross-cut shredded or destroyed by [destruction vendor], never put in the trash.

6.2 Computers, copiers, phones, drives and backup media are wiped or destroyed before they're sold, donated, recycled or sent back at lease end.

6.3 We hire a destruction vendor only after checking it out, and the contract says what it destroys and how.

6.4 Data in cloud systems is deleted through the vendor, and backups age out on schedule.

7 Proof

7.1 Each destruction is logged with the type of record, the date range, the method and who did it.

7.2 Certificates of destruction from vendors are kept for [period].

8 Review and sign-off

8.1 [Policy owner] reviews this policy and the schedule [every year] and whenever we add a system, a vendor or a store.

8.2 Approved by

Printed name and title _____ Signature _____ Date _____

Finished the schedule?
A complimentary IT and cybersecurity assessment looks at the systems behind it and where the store stands against the FTC Safeguards Rule, and puts the findings in a written report.

heliontechnologies.com/it-assessment/

Data retention policy template from Helion Technologies. A starting point, not legal advice. The final policy and every retention period are the dealership's own.
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