

Top 3 Tips for Smartly Handling Project Documents

By [Melissa Dewey Brumback](#)

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In the [Contract Risks Management Group on LinkedIn](#), [L.H. Chin](#) wrote an article about file keeping for contract risk management. Basically, his premise is that if you cannot keep your Project files orderly, you have exponentially increased your chances of a problem later. His particular example dealt with originals versus reproduced copies, which is only somewhat germane to North Carolina contracts. (Here, copies can be used as evidence most of the time—though not always). His main point, however, about the ability to minimize future risks by having good document control policies in place, is something every project manager should think about.

Here are a few tips of my own in that regard:

1. File all communications in one place. Don't keep faxes in one file, email in another, and letters in a third. Don't keep incoming and outgoing correspondence separated by vendor. Keep it all in one chronological file. If you ever find yourself needing legal assistance, this will save many hours and untold stress for everybody.

1.b. Caveat: don't feel like you need to print out every email. Do, however, maintain a separate email e-folder for the Project, and go ahead and print those really crucial, smoking gun emails.

2. If you insist on violating Rule 1 (and I know those of you who read this article would never consider such a thing, right?): Have all the files, categories, and such you want, but please also make a "master" chronological file of all correspondence. Just do it.

3. If you have any communications with your lawyer, an insurance representative (outside of the normal bonding paperwork), or otherwise have documents relating to

potential claims, **do** keep them separate. Put all such correspondence, in a folder marked "legal," away from the Project file to prevent inadvertent disclosure to anyone else if there is ever litigation on the matter.

3.b If in doubt whether something should be in "legal" or "correspondence", err on the side of "legal." Your attorney can always change the classification later, but she can't put the genie back in the bottle if something that is privileged is mistakenly given to a party suing you.

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