



October 16, 2009

Guest column: Eric Haas Don't sweat it: shred it

By Eric Haas

No matter what size or type of a business you're involved with, chances are there are files full of confidential information.

Protecting this information has to be among the top priorities for any business owner, and in today's environment, meeting that goal in an economical, environmentally-friendly way is even more important.

The solution to protecting confidential information in a cost-effective, eco-friendly way is shredding. It's important to understand that virtually any type of document which contains sensitive information can be shredded, including financial, account, tax and payroll records, maps, blue prints, magnetic media, new product proposals, invoices and even junk mail.

Chances are your business has a compact shredder on site, but you're right in thinking that such a shredder can't destroy all documents containing sensitive information.

Seek out a local certified records management service that can not only handle shredding all types of documents but also recycles all shredded paper waste. By doing so, you'll be assured that you're helping the environment while protecting your confidential information from getting into the wrong hands.

Still not convinced shredding is the way to go? Here are a few additional benefits you'll see when shredding sensitive information:

- Doing your part in being eco-friendly. It's common knowledge that paper products pack our landfills, pollute our air and use countless trees and gallons of water. The more we can reuse our paper waste, the better off our environment will be.
- Legal compliance. Shredding is a great way to be sure complying with various laws including Data Protection Act, HITECH/ HIPPA, and FACTA. These acts require that certain paper waste such as medical records, salary details or personal address details, must legally be disposed of. Such records must be kept up to date and must also be shredded at the proper time.
- Protection from business identity theft. Business identity theft is becoming more and more common. If confidential information isn't shredded and properly disposed of, the result can be devastating for a business.

Whether you're just starting to utilize shredding as a way to destroy confidential data or you've been shredding documents for years, it's important for all businesses to incorporate a shredding schedule into their records management plan.

When developing your schedule, take some time and seek out a certified records management service that will come regularly to your location to shred documents. This will help you stay organized with your paper waste and you'll also be reassured confidential information isn't being housed in your business longer than necessary or from ending up in the wrong hands.