



GUIDANCE FOR DESTROYING CONTROLLED UNCLASSIFIED INFORMATION Version 2.0

Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) policy requires that agencies and organizations destroy CUI in a manner that makes it unreadable, indecipherable, and irrecoverable. This job aid provides guidance for the proper destruction of CUI.

Paper-based CUI

Paper-based CUI destruction may be a single-step or multi-step process. To dispose of paper-based CUI in a single step:

- Shred the paper using cross-cut shredders¹ that produce 1 mm x 5 mm (0.04 in. x 0.2 in.) particles (or smaller), or
- Pulverize or disintegrate the paper using disintegrator devices equipped with a 3/32 in. (2.4 mm) security screen

Organizations that cannot shred or disintegrate paper-based CUI in a manner that meets the single-step standards may use a multi-step destruction process where they shred to a lesser standard, followed by additional destruction processes. They may also use contracted or shared service destruction groups. In such cases, the organization must keep the following in mind:

1. Ensure CUI is secured while it awaits destruction.
2. Determine whether the material will be shredded on-site or at another location.
3. Establish the frequency of destruction, including pick-up when offsite destruction services are used, to ensure large quantities of CUI do not accumulate.
4. Verify and ensure physical safeguarding measures for all stages of destruction, including:
 - Consolidation locations
 - Pick-up
 - Transportation to interim locations
 - Transportation to final shredding locations
 - Recycling
 - Destruction sites
 - Storage at all times while awaiting final destruction
5. Limit the time between pick-up and final destruction when it is conducted offsite.
6. Ensure that only authorized employees and vendors have access to interim storage locations.
7. Ensure the destruction renders the end product unreadable, indecipherable, and irrecoverable.
8. Ensure CUI materials are not misplaced during the process.
9. Ensure a validation or inspection timeline and quality control process are in place to ensure compliance with all destruction requirements.
10. Document all processes used.

Find the NSA-approved shredders list at: <https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/resources/everyone/media-destruction/nsaeplpapershreddersmarch2020.pdf?ver=2020-03-17-094747-943>

¹ <https://www.nsa.gov/portals/75/documents/resources/everyone/media-destruction/nsaeplpapershreddersmarch2020.pdf?ver=2020-03-17-094747-943>

Media-based CUI

CUI may be stored on storage devices, phones, network devices, computers, and other types of devices requiring additional methods of destruction and sanitization.

Some typical destruction methods for such devices and materials are:

- Disintegrate, Pulverize, Melt, or Incinerate outsourced metal.
- Incineration at a licensed incineration facility with the specific capabilities to perform these activities effectively, securely, and safely.
- Shred or disintegrate flexible media (e.g., diskettes) once the media are physically removed from their outer containers.
 - The shred size of refuse should be small enough that there is a reasonable assurance in proportion to the data confidentiality that the data cannot be reconstructed.
 - To make reconstructing the data even more difficult, the shredded material can be mixed with non-sensitive material of the same type (e.g. shredded paper/shredded flexible media).

Some forms of media-based CUI may also be sanitized through clearing and purging of the device or equipment.

For additional information regarding sanitization and destruction methods, consult the following policies:

- NIST Special Publication 800-88, Section 5 “Guidelines for Media Sanitization” (<https://nvlpubs.nist.gov/nistpubs/SpecialPublications/NIST.SP.800-88r1.pdf>)
- NSA Media Destruction Guidance (<https://www.nsa.gov/Resources/Media-Destruction-Guidance/>)