

Attachment # 1

Organizational History Files: Instructions for Creation, Contents, and Retirement

1. *Function:* These instructions provide a general definition of an Organizational History File (OHF) and present guidelines for the creation and contents of the file.
2. *Definition and Purpose:* An Organizational History File is a unit's own documentary record of its history, traditions, and accomplishments. It is distinct and separate from the unit's operational records and files. The purpose of the OHF is to provide material that will be meaningful and of historical value to present and future members of the unit and can be used as a means of instilling unit pride and esprit de corps. See also FM 1-20, pp. 3-3, 3-6.
3. *Guidance:* It is important to bear in mind that these files are to be used by future members of the unit who will not be familiar with the people and places of today. It can be likened to your family's genealogical records and photo albums and is being created to serve a similar purpose—to inform, educate, enlighten--and perhaps even entertain--future generations of unit members.
4. In creating your unit's file, please take particular note:
 - a. Photographs must be properly captioned so that they will be useful to future unit members. That is, include the full names where possible of the persons in the picture and a description of the event, location, or whatever it is the photograph depicts. Keep in mind that uncaptioned photographs are likely to be discarded upon receipt.
 - b. Because electronic media, such as tape recordings, compact disks, videotapes, etc. may deteriorate with time and/or become obsolete because of rapidly changing technology, it is recommended that you document important events in multiple formats to avoid this problem. For example, supplement a videotaped ceremony with such items as the event's program, captioned photographs, and any relevant news items. Because the means to read or listen to a particular electronic format (e.g., Beta vs. VHS vs. DVD) may no longer be available when the unit is reactivated, the supplemental documentation will help ensure that a record of the event is available for future reference.
 - c. Trophies and plaques are not appropriate items for retention in the Organizational History File. If included, they will be discarded before the file is placed in storage.
5. *Instructions:* The creation of the Organizational History File should begin immediately upon the activation of the unit. If the unit has been active in the past, there may be a file already in storage. The unit's historical officer should contact the U.S. Army Center of Military History by email at usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.answers@mail.mil to determine if a file exists. The Organizational History File should include documentation of the unit's activation and information about the activation ceremony,

e.g. activation orders, ceremonial programs, installation news articles, photos, etc. In addition:

a. The Organizational History File will include the following:

1. Statements of primary and secondary missions
2. Periodic summaries of unit activities and achievements
3. A listing or documentation of significant unit events, preferably by calendar year
4. Deployment/redeployment orders and rosters of deployed personnel
5. Copies of letters and orders relating to activation, inactivation, redesignation, reorganization, and other changes in unit status. (See AR 220-5.) For Army National Guard and Army Reserve units, documents concerning entry into and release from active Federal or military service will also be included.

b. When applicable, Organizational History Files should include:

1. Unit Histories
2. Annual Histories
3. Copies of most recent Lineage and Honors Certificate or Statement of Service
4. Information on organizational flags, coats of arms, and insignia
5. Citations and certificates (unframed) for unit decorations
6. Newspaper and magazine clippings, with sources and dates
7. Unframed photographs, pictures, certificates, letters, and programs, which should be identified with dates, names, places, events, and other relevant information
8. Names of commanders and inclusive dates of command
9. Copies of oral history interviews (tapes and/or transcripts) conducted with unit personnel by combat historians

c. Do not include the following items in the Organizational History File:

1. Plaques and trophies.
2. Paintings, artwork, etc.
3. Any glass items, including picture frames.
4. Paper clips and rubber bands.
5. Oversized items.

6. *Requesting Assistance:* If your post has a historian, you should first seek assistance from that office. Questions regarding the creation, care, and maintenance of unit Organizational History Files may also be addressed to the U.S. Army Center of Military History (AAMH-FPO), by e-mail at usarmy.mcnair.cmh.mbx.answers@mail.mil. Questions regarding the retrieval of OHF from storage or the placing of OHF into storage should be addressed to CMH (see paragraph 5 above). See also FM 1-20 and the Force Structure and Unit History Branch's webpage at <http://www.history.army.mil/unitinfo.html>.

Organizational History Files: Guidelines for Packing and Shipping

1. *Function:* This appendix provides guidelines for the packing and shipping of unit Organizational History Files from units that are being inactivated, discontinued, or are otherwise unable to care for the items.
2. *Purpose:* The primary purpose is to inform commanders and their points of contact as to the procedures to follow in regard to these files.
3. *Instructions:* Within ten working days of receipt of inactivation orders or upon the occurrence of other conditions that make continued custody impossible, MTOE units will notify the US Army Center of Military History (see contact information for CMH above), regarding the amount of material to be placed in storage. TDA units that have maintained Organizational History Files and wish to place them into storage should also notify the Center at the address above. If copies of the packing and storage guidelines are needed, the Center will forward them at that time. Items classified as unit historical property are subject to different procedures and should not be included with the Organizational History Files. (See AR 870-20.)
 - a. Before packing organizational history files for shipment, the following guidelines should be followed:
 1. *Do not include* plaques, trophies, and similar items
 2. *Remove* elastic bands, paper clips, etc. whenever possible because these items deteriorate over time and can cause damage to paper and other materials.
 3. *Remove* photographs from frames. The frames and glass are likely to be broken in transit and are very difficult to store.
 4. *Avoid* oversize items. Storage space is limited and expensive.
 5. *Protect* items from damage and deterioration. Use sturdy cartons for shipment and use “bubble” wrapping or the equivalent around items subject to breakage.
 6. *Ensure* that photographs are captioned and other items are properly identified.
 - b. When in doubt about whether to include a particular item, consult the post historian, if available, or the Center of Military History. Remember that these files will be used by future members of the unit as a record of the past.
 - c. Please be advised that items that do not conform to the guidelines above may be discarded.
 - d. Ensure that the files and boxes are labeled accurately and identified as Organizational History Files. If possible, prepare separate boxes for files belonging to different units. If more than one unit’s material is being included in the same shipment, however, each unit’s items should be identified and labeled separately by official unit designation and Unit Identification Code (UIC). The inclusion of a detailed packing list on both the inside and outside of each shipping container is highly recommended.
 - e. Include the name, phone numbers (commercial and DSN), and e-mail address (if applicable) of a point of contact in case questions arise.

f. The sending unit is responsible for the cost of shipment and transportation. Organizational History Files should be sent by registered mail (return receipt requested) when size and weight meet commercial carrier requirements and when it is economically advantageous. Insured mail may be used when the custodian determines that the value of the material warrants such service

g. Especially in the event of a large shipment, request that the Center of Military History be notified at least five working days in advance of mailing so that arrangements can be made for its receipt.