Employer record destroy-date schedule

Write a destroy date next to each line for every year you file. When two rules apply to one record, use the later date.

Client or engagement

Books and tax returns

- [ ] Filed business returns: Schedule C, Form 1065, 1120-S or 1120
  Keep for good; they anchor every other record
- [ ] General ledger, journals and year-end trial balance
  Until the return they fed is out of its period
- [ ] Bank and credit card statements
  Every account the business used, all months
- [ ] Sales records: register tapes, deposit slips, invoices issued
  Show amount and source of gross receipts
- [ ] Expense invoices, receipts and canceled checks
  Each one tied to a ledger entry
- [ ] Forms 1099-NEC you filed and the Forms W-9 behind them
  Same period as that year's return; $600 line for 2025 payments, $2,000 for 2026

Payroll and employment tax

- [ ] Forms 941, 940 and state payroll returns
  At least 4 years after the tax is due or paid
- [ ] Copies of Forms W-2 and W-3
  Same 4-year minimum
- [ ] Each employee's Form W-4
  Keep the latest and any it replaced in the period
- [ ] Payroll registers with employee data
  At least 3 years from last entry under wage-hour rules
- [ ] Time cards and wage rate tables
  At least 2 years under wage-hour rules
- [ ] Tax deposit confirmations
  Proof each deposit was made on time

Hiring and contracts

- [ ] Form I-9 for each employee
  3 years after hire or 1 year after leaving, the later; stored apart

- [ ] Blank Form I-9 stock checked for edition
  Use the 01/20/25 edition; discard any form expiring 07/31/2026
- [ ] Collective bargaining and pay agreements
  At least 3 years from last effective date
- [ ] Signed contracts with clients and suppliers
  Life of the contract plus the period of any return it affects
- [ ] Leases for premises and equipment
  Life of the lease plus the tax period

Assets

- [ ] Purchase invoices and closing papers for equipment, vehicles, buildings
  Until the asset is sold, then the sale year's period
- [ ] Depreciation schedules (Form 4562) for each year
  Same period as the purchase records
- [ ] Improvement invoices for assets you still own
  They add to basis
- [ ] Sale, trade-in or disposal documents
  Keep with the asset file; trades carry basis forward