

## Optometry Coding & Billing Alert

### Reader Question: Shred - but Don't Cut Corners

**Question:** How should our medical practice dispose of hard copies of files?

Delaware Subscriber

**Answer:** No debate here: Shredding is the only answer, says **Megan Hardy, CMM**, office manager with the Poronsky Family Practice in Palos Heights, Ill.

Shred anything with patients' names on it, she says. Depending on the size of your practice, she adds, you might even need to hire a shredding service.

"We started doing it in-house, with a couple of shredders of our own," Hardy says, but they quickly burned out the shredders from so much use. If it seems like a lot of trouble, appearances don't deceive.

But as horror stories accumulate - from tales of boxed medical files falling out of pickup trucks to accounts of boxed medical files sitting in parking lots alongside trash bins - it's clearly the right measure.

If your shredding service does a poor job disposing of your documents, you're the one who will be responsible.

One way to know what you're paying for is to hire a service that will drive its trucks to your office and shred your documents on-site while you wait, Hardy says.

Make sure your service is HIPAA-compliant, and remember that most of the horror stories involve low-cost or "cut-rate" shredding services.