

POPI Act parameters and what it means for business supplied by Dr Peter Tobin, Prof David Taylor and John Cato.

# Cut, shred, destroy

*With the recent introduction of the POPI Act, the shredder is being recognised as the first line of defence to protect against information loss and fraudulent activity*



**T**he right to privacy is regarded as serious business in South Africa. This includes the right to protection against the unlawful collection, retention, dissemination and use of any individual's personal information.

The Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act was created to do just that – protect your personal information. It will do this by regulating the way in which personal information may be processed by establishing conditions that prescribe the minimum requirements to be considered lawful.

Basically, what this means is that companies have to receive consent from individuals before they can obtain and retain their personal information for communication or any

other purpose. “Personal information” includes contact details, demographic information, personal history as well as communication records.

By meeting the requirements of POPI, businesses will not only be complying with legislation, but also adding value to their trade and earning the respect and loyalty of the consumers they market to.

The route to understanding the implications and preparing an organisation for compliance with POPI means businesses will be in the market for a shredder.

While the basic design of a paper shredder is the same whether it is a desktop version or an industrial shredder, there are a range of considerations that businesses must take into account in order to get the right tool for the job. When picking out a new shredder it must first be decided how much paper it can handle, what type of shred is needed, if it can handle materials other than paper, if it is a name brand and therefore carries a warranty, and most importantly, does it meet adequate security conditions

required by the new legislation.

## Volume

Most office environments end up shredding approximately twice the amount of paper they think they will after purchasing a shredder. A more accurate estimate of how many sheets will need to be shredded per day and how many sheets the shredder should be able to handle at a time is an important first question. A small personal paper shredder which may only be able to shred one to five pieces of paper at once, over 20 uses per day, will work for a small home office. A heavy volume industrial shredder can shred between 5 000 and 36 000 sheets of paper a day, depending on its configuration. The majority of SMEs see a need for somewhere in the middle; one which can shred 50 to 100 sheets of paper each day.

## Type

Most basic paper shredders use a strip cut system, which turns each sheet of paper into thin ribbons. High security

shredders use a cross-cut mechanism, which twists the paper while cutting it, reducing it to small scraps. These are essential for handling especially sensitive material. In some cases, a shredder can handle more than paper; for example, diskettes, compact discs, cardboard or credit cards can also be shredded.

**Size**

Most shredders only handle paper up to legal size. Ask your supplier for alternatives if you handle confidential material of tabloid size or larger.

**Quality**

The quality of the paper shredder and the warranty is important. Is the motor strong? How well it will hold up in the long term? What is the proper care and how can it be used most effectively?

**Security**

Most shredders are referred to as straight cut, and consist of a series of blades that will slice through a document either vertically or horizontally. This can protect information from casual perusal, though it often is not enough for the privacy concerns of a business. Documents that are cut into uniform strips may be reassembled given enough time and effort.

Cross-cut shredders typically include perpendicularly opposed blades that can make a series of both horizontal and vertical cuts. This can result in thin, short shreds of paper that are difficult to obtain any useful information from. Confetti shredders work in a similar way and can reduce documents to tiny scraps of paper.

An even more secure method of shredding is referred to as micro cut, which results in pieces so small it would be nearly impossible to obtain information from them. Choosing the best type of cut pattern will depend on how important information security is to a business.

Security for business just became very important. POPI was signed into law in November 2013, and is expected to become effective in the next few months.

Organisations will then have 12 months to become fully compliant or face the prospect of stiff penalties (including fines of up to R10-million) or reputational damage and loss of customers.

Personal information includes data of customers, suppliers and employees, whether they are in e-mails, invoices, databases or printouts. This means businesses will need to show they have processes and procedures in place to handle effectively and securely all aspects covered in the POPI Act.

Privacy and Data Protection Acts have already existed in other countries for several years. Examples of these are the European Union (EU) Data Protection Act which came into effect in 1995, and the UK Data Protection Act (1998). The POPI Act is modelled on the EU legislation to a large extent, and POPI has been written to ensure that South Africa is in line with international best practice.

We asked some of our shredder suppliers about how best to prevent information from falling into the hands of the wrong people.

**Beswick Office Products**

According to Beswick, all it takes is one mistake. A single second of complacency can result in years of self-justification, and endless explanations that it wasn't you. Losing your identity to fraudsters can set off a chain reaction of damaging events for you, your family and your business.

It could be as simple as a careless post on a social networking site, or an old bank statement thrown in the bin. Each small detail could help a fraudster build up a big enough picture of you, enabling them to take out a mortgage or a loan in your name, and ruin your credit rating.

The best way to dispose of confidential paper or sensitive information is by shredding onsite with a cross-cut shredder to ensure they are disposed of securely.

By investing in a Fellowes Shredder you will be avoiding financial penalties for non-compliance.



**The essential parameters of POPI**

Businesses will have to put a number of essential parameters in place in order to comply with POPI.

**These include:**

- Personal information such as employee and customer information will have to be protected and processed in a different way, in accordance with the conditions of the law;
- Employee and customer information may not be disclosed to another party without the person's consent;
- Employee and customer information will have to be destroyed in a controlled manner when the purpose for which the information is held is no longer valid;
- Standards will have to be defined for shredding equipment similar to standards in other countries so that the new law can be applied to these in an appropriate manner; and
- Steps should be taken to ensure that personal information stored on hard drives and removable media such as memory sticks and CDs is protected in a controlled manner. Consideration should be given to providing advice to consumers in this area.



**Identity theft:** Tax season is peak season for identity thieves, when old tax records and other expired documents are being discarded. Know what shredder you need to securely destroy these documents.

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Fellowes has introduced the new AutoMax auto-feed shredders, offering a complete walk-away shredding experience. The new AutoMax is designed to eliminate any prep-work for materials to be shredded. Paper clips and staples can be positioned anywhere on the documents, paper can be crumpled and folded, paper can be glossy or double-sided, and CDs and credit cards can also be shredded. The robust SureFeed engineering only requires the user to load the bin with shredding materials, push the button and walk away.

The AutoMax shredder models include the 300C and 500C, and offer numerous innovative features, including:

- Jam Guard System ensures jam-free operation;
- SmartLock engages with each shred cycle to protect confidential information;
- SilentShred offers ultra-quiet performance for shared workspaces;
- An energy saving Sleep Mode feature shuts down the shredder after 2 minutes of inactivity; and
- A versatile, flat top provides easy office integration and additional storage space.

For more information contact [kate@beswick.co.za](mailto:kate@beswick.co.za)

**Parrot Products**

In answer to the demand from their client base for a larger range of shredding machines, Parrot Products introduced their 2014 range in January.

The range, (refer to the Parrot Products Shredder brochure inserted into this edition of *My Office*), satisfies the general demand for home and office shredding machines.

Confidential information, whether personal or business-related, should never be disposed of nonchalantly. Shredding ensures that any information is rendered useless to anyone who tries to capitalise on identity theft.

Choosing a shredder should not become a daunting task. Bear the following in mind:

- Budget - entry-level Parrot Products Shredders range from R350.00 to R750.00; small office machines from R1 400.00 to R4 700.00; and medium to large office machines from R6 500.00 to R18 000.00.
- Use – is the shredder only for paper, or will it be used for credit cards and CDs too?
- Sensitivity of information - shredders are classified into security levels according to how they shred. A low security unit will shred in a strip cut, approximately 7mm wide, and is suitable for home use. A high security unit will shred in a micro cut (cross-cut), approximately 1mm by 8mm. These shredders are generally used to dispose of highly confidential documentation.

- Volume and frequency – how many sheets need to be shredded, and how often will the machine be used? Low volume use is generally allocated to the home office shredder. Larger, faster shredders are suited to offices and are available for both medium and high volume use. They shred between 10 and 26 sheets at a time.

Parrot Products shredders are stocked and distributed on a national basis, and demonstration units are kept at all branches.

**Rexel Office Products**

“We expect that the POPI legislation will have the effect of increasing market demand for shredding. Companies and individuals not already destroying unwanted confidential information will begin to do so. Those in the habit and discipline of shredding will have cause to consider more secure levels of destruction. In the UK, for example, their Data Protection Act changed market



**Lawfully processing information**

There are a number of conditions that need to be met for the lawful processing of personal information according to the POPI Act:

- Accountability - assigning ownership in your business;
- Processing limitation - processing information for lawful reasons and in a manner that does not infringe privacy;
- Purpose specification - only

obtaining and holding personal information for a specific purpose;

- Further processing limitation - further processing of personal information must be compatible with the purpose for which it was collected;
- Information quality - ensuring that information is complete and accurate;
- Openness - informing individuals that their information has been obtained and the purpose thereof;

- Security safeguards - the integrity of personal information must be secured using reasonable technical and organisational measures; and
- Data subject participation - an individual has the right to request whether an organisation holds their personal information. An individual may request the information is deleted or corrected if it is incorrectly stored.



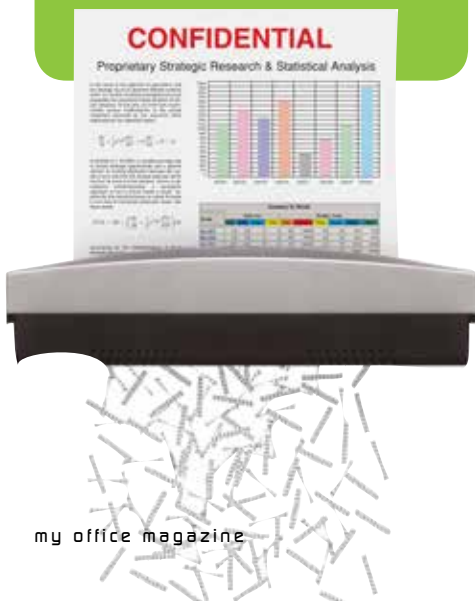
**POPI dos and don'ts**

**Do:**

- Understand what the POPI Act means for your business;
- Make sure you have assigned ownership for compliance with POPI;
- Start by conducting an assessment of how far you are already compliant;
- Develop a plan to address the identified areas of non-compliance;
- Engage with all the relevant stakeholders impacted by POPI;
- Remember the “stick and carrot” aspects of POPI; and
- Think about the implications of POPI for the products and services you provide.

**Don't:**

- Ignore POPI - it won't go away;
- Put off your compliance efforts just because you have a 12 month grace period;
- Underestimate the amount of work that is required to change your business policies, processes and procedures, documentation and systems;
- Panic. POPI compliance is more like climbing Table Mountain than Mount Everest; and
- Rush into your compliance efforts. Take a structured, project-based approach to make your compliance efforts effective.



demand from predominantly straight cut shredding to predominantly cross-cut shredding in the space of two to three years,” says Bill Bayley, MD of Rexel.

A shredder offers a measure of security. It is therefore logical to start the discussion around the purchase of a shredder with the question: “how much security do you need?”

In simple terms, a straight cut shredder cuts an A4 piece of paper into 36 strips. A cross-cut shredder cuts an A4 page into 300 to 400 pieces.

A micro cut shredder cuts one A4 page into 2 000, and a super micro cut shredder cuts a page into 6 000 pieces.

“There is no such thing as a POPI compliant shredder,” says Bayley. “The POPI legislation calls for businesses and organisations to set up and implement a policy with regards to the processing, storage and destruction of personal information. The Act does not specify appropriate levels of security for the secure shredding of paperwork. Information by its very nature has differing levels of confidentiality. It is up to each organisation to define adequate security as part of their POPI compliance policy and practices. Credit Applications typically include company information as well as a certain amount of personal information which according to the Act requires a higher level of security. Staff salaries, wages, retirement information or CVs will need a higher level of shredding security than would general office communications. The Act does not set these ‘appropriate’ levels of shredding security. It is up to vendors and dealers in the supply chain to assist in recommending appropriate shredding security levels.

“Some organisations make use of outsourced bulk shredding services which seem to offer a secure solution, but how secure is it? Bulk shredders are mounted on the back of trucks. Paperwork therefore needs to be securely controlled from the office to the basement pick up point. Bulk shredders tear paperwork into 10mm to 12mm strips. Does tearing an A4 page into 20 strips satisfy the requirement for secure destruction?”

“Our belief is that personal information should be destroyed with, at the very least, a cross-cut shredder. Our Auto+ range of shredders provide an ideal and secure solution when used in support of a POPI compliance policy. Auto+ 60 page and 80 page shredders situated at the desk side of low volume users

provide immediate and secure destruction of paperwork. For higher volume desk side users we offer the Auto+ 100 page or 200 page models. For users in larger shared offices we offer the Auto+ 300 page, 500 page or 750 page which feature a lockable chamber ensuring that the paperwork remains secure until the shredding cycle is completed. Auto+ shredders save time as the user does not need to stand and feed. Auto+ shredders are quiet and therefore do not disturb the working environment. Simply load the machine, start the shred cycle and get on with whatever needs doing next. How long will it take to shred 750 sheets? You don't care because you're not there.”

**AZ Trading**

A recent article published in the *Saturday Star*, entitled *ID thieves raid trash bins*, questions just how secure confidential and personal details are.

“The article states ‘banks, retailers, cell-phone stores and travel agents throw clients’ sensitive personal information in trash bins at shopping malls giving fraudsters all they need to steal identities’,” says Paul Naidoo. “The article confirmed that personal information gathered is enough for fraudsters to open bank accounts, buy goods, illegally apply for credit or access medical aids in your name, and that businesses can play a critical role in the prevention of fraud.”

How? By ensuring they have stringent processes and controls in place to protect consumer’s personal information. The removal of customer records containing confidential information should be shredded first to prevent ID theft.

AZ Trading supplies a range of shredders catering for the modern market where users need to save energy and cost. With a vast range of shredding machines for home and personal use ranging up to industrial and recycling operations.

According to POPI, personal information of a confidential matter should be shredded at a minimum standard cross-cut level where pieces of the document cannot be pasted together. AZ Trading supplies shredders with a security level from one to seven, and cut sizes ranging from 12mm to 0,8mm by 2mm.

The range of shredders available in the market place includes technological features such as energy saving, touch panel operations and auto oiling features. Shredders in the range are capable of destroying paper, CDs, credit cards, floppy discs, cardboard, textiles, leather,

USB drives, hard drives, laptops, computers, glass, plastic and organic waste.

When choosing a shredder it is important to decide on specific needs, such as maximum throughput (page capacity), cut size (din level), bin size and the number of users that would be using the machine.

There are numerous models in the market place; however, these four key factors will narrow the choice of shredders to a basic few.

Bear in mind that a shredder is a mechanical item, and often generates internal paper dust. It is therefore advisable to have your shredder serviced at regular intervals. This service will prolong the life of your machine and keep your confidential documents safe. ■

**Useful links:**

- [http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/bills/B9-2009\\_ProtectionofPersonallInformation.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/bills/B9-2009_ProtectionofPersonallInformation.pdf)
- <http://www.iact-africa.com/popi.html>



**Preparing for POPI**

A number of steps should be taken to prepare for POPI.

These include:

- Organisational – start a POPI preparation programme and appoint an information officer to drive your POPI compliance initiatives. An awareness and training programme should be prepared and delivered so that everyone in the business understands the implications of POPI.
- Legal – review contracts with service providers where personal information is stored on your company's behalf. For example, if you have outsourcing arrangements in place, ensure that these are amended to include personal information protection. This applies

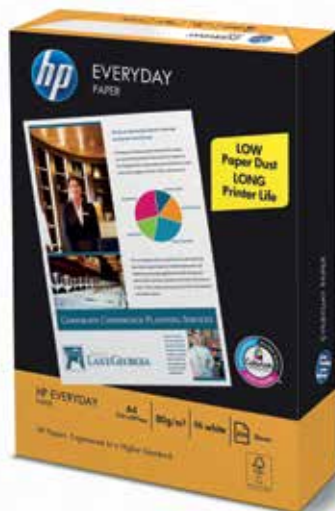
to business partners as well, where customers are shared with them.

- Business – identify processes where personal information is involved. Examples include customer and supplier information, as is the handling of employee information. These processes should be amended to ensure that they comply with the principles in the POPI Act.
- Technology – electronically stored personal information should be identified and steps taken to ensure that such information is protected in line with the Security safeguards principle contained in the Act. The best protection for individuals is to ensure that their personal information is only collected where it is necessary, relevant and not excessive in nature.



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