Plain Writing Act Compliance
Annual Report
April 2018

Dissemination

- In response to the Plain Writing Act of 2010, an action memorandum from the Executive Director for Operations instructed all managers to familiarize themselves with the requirements of the Act, and to encourage staff to take appropriate training.
- Staff is reminded to use plain language through periodic articles in the agency's in-house newsletter, the *NRC Reporter*.
- The Commission has directed staff to make greater use of plain language when speaking to the public about high profile events, such as the nuclear accident at Fukushima-Daiichi in Japan.
- The Executive Director issued follow-up guidance to the staff on improving the quality of documents, emphasizing clarity of writing and the use of plain language, with links to training opportunities.

Action Plan

- The NRC identified the following documents that should be the focus of plain writing: Performance Assessments, Generic Communications, Inspection Reports, and Significant Enforcement Actions. These are stored in the agency's Agencywide Documents Access & Management System database and are accessible through the public web site and the Public Document Room in Rockville, MD. In cases where a document is necessarily technically complex, employees are instructed to provide a plain language cover memo or abstract.
- Most documents prepared by NRC staff are reviewed by technical editors who review them for, among others things, use of plain language. The technical editors (and NRC staff preparing documents) are expected to follow NUREG-1379, Rev. 2, "NRC Editorial Style Guide," which includes a chapter entitled "Plain Language."
- In 2016, the agency issued Revision 5 of NUREG-0544, "Collections and Abbreviations," which includes a section on the use of abbreviations in plain language as well as links to plain writing resources.

Example of Recent Activity

The NRC staff has been working to simplify and clarify Management Directive (MD) 8.11 guidance on the review process for 10 CFR 2.206 petitions requesting that the Commission take enforcement-related action. This has included removing a significant amount of detailed implementing guidance and relocating that guidance to a desktop guide. The desktop guide will be a publicly available living document (similar to the NRC's Allegations Manual), intended for use by NRC staff implementing the program. This provides for a more focused discussion in MD 8.11 on overall NRC policy for the program, which we believe will be more understandable to the public and other external stakeholders, while still providing staff the information they need to implement the program. We have also worked to clarify multiple sections of the MD, and have reordered the guidance to more closely align with the steps in the process. This way, a petitioner or other external stakeholder will better understand what to expect throughout the process.

Web site
Consistent with the Act's requirements, the NRC created a section of our public website, under the broader topic of Open Government, which outlines our Plain Writing Action Plan and also offers general guidance on plain writing at the NRC. All annual reports are posted there.

Training
The NRC offers multiple training courses to teach elements of plain writing and clear communication. All staff members are encouraged to take the basic courses. Employees who write documents read by the public are encouraged to pursue the more extensive training options. These courses include:

Instructor-Led Courses

- Writing in Plain Language (Course ID 802)
- Technical Writing (Course ID 1002)
- Effective Writing for Acquisitions (Course ID 337153)

On-Line Courses

- Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing (Course comm_20_a03_be_enus)
- The Plain Writing Act (Course fgov_01_a30_lc_enus)
- Plain Language (Course ID 3281)
- Business Grammar: Sentence Construction (Course comm_20_a05_bs_enus)
- Writing for Technical Professionals: Effective Writing Techniques (Course ib_wstp_a02_it_enus)
- Clarity and Conciseness in Business Writing (Course comm_51_a02_bs_enus)
- Written Communication (Course pc_ch_pach015)

In 2017, these courses were taken a combined 104 times.

Stakeholder Feedback

The NRC has a long-standing commitment to openness and transparency. Since the passage of the Plain Writing Act, the agency implemented subscription-based services on our web site to enable stakeholders to keep abreast of current agency news and activities. We've enhanced stakeholder involvement in public meetings by expanding the use of Web event and virtual meeting technologies, and furthered collaboration within industry and government workgroups by using web conferencing technologies. We continue to use interactive mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and awareness, including social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook. The NRC Office of Public Affairs also continues to enhance readability of communication products for the public, when appropriate, by applying the Flesch Grade Level Readability Formula.