

**Plain Writing Act Compliance  
Annual Report  
April 2019**

**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.
- 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.

**Examples of Recent Activity**

The current Executive Director for Operations, appointed to her position in July 2018, has made enhancing the quality of communications one of her key focus areas. It is her belief that our written products are a key part of our decision-making process and, therefore, they are critically important in accomplishing the NRC's mission. Plainly written, concise, and well-organized written products foster fully informed decisions, convey better context on the subject to stakeholders and the public, and ensure our decisions are better understood in the future as related issues are evaluated.

To that end, in November 2018 she issued an "NRC Document Quality checklist" that must be completed for key communications that pass through the Office of the Executive Director. This checklist is a supplement to a number of existing agency procedures that address various aspects of preparing different types of agency documents.

In another recent activity, the agency technical editors developed a briefing on selected writing

topics (many of which relate to plain writing) and presented it to a branch in the Office of International Programs. Time allowing, it may be offered to other branches at the NRC in the future.

### **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 more extensive training options. These courses include:

#### Instructor-Led Courses

- Writing in Plain Language (Course ID 802)
- Effective Writing for Acquisitions (Course ID 337153)
- Advanced Specific Topics in Rulemaking: Writing (Course ID 68144)

#### On-Line Courses

- The Plain Writing Act (Course fgov\_01\_a30\_lc\_enus)
- Plain Language (Course ID 3281)
- 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)
- Writing Skills for Public Relations (Course amk\_01\_a02\_bs\_enus)
- Writing for Business (Course pc\_bi\_pabi012)
- Communicating Effectively with Customers (Course acs\_02\_a02\_bs\_enus)

In fiscal year 2018, these courses were taken a combined 53 times.

### **Stakeholder Feedback**

The NRC has a long-standing commitment to openness and transparency. Since the passage of the Plain Writing Act, the agency has 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 with 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.