

**Plain Writing Act Compliance
Annual Report
April 2020**

Dissemination

- In response to the *Plain Writing Act of 2010* [the Act], 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 has 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 Website 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 NRC's commitment to openness and transparency, by helping to ensure our regulatory decisions are clearly communicated and better understood.

NRC remains focused on taking steps to measurably increase the quality of its internal and external communications by clarifying expectations for written products and sharing examples of effective written communications. Within the last year the agency developed templates for routine correspondence including letters from the Chairman, memoranda, NRC letters, and Commission papers. These templates are easy-to-use tools that will help to enhance uniformity and quality of written documents across the agency.

Additionally, work is underway to develop a prototype for developing one page briefing documents that provide high-level, key information to agency senior management. This effort will bring added efficiencies and improve consistency in how documents are developed to support the EDO and Commission for congressional hearings.

Lastly, staff is developing a template for preparing briefing materials for the Commission, EDO, and other agency senior management to support meetings with external stakeholders. This template is intended to focus staff resources on providing clear and concise topics of interest with the appropriate level of detail to prepare for and inform meetings with external stakeholders.

All of the aforementioned activities not only promote the EDO's commitment to improve the quality of NRC communications, but they also support the agency's Transformation initiative by employing existing technology in innovative ways to enhance intra-agency collaboration on the drafting and review of documents. As a result, not only will the overall quality and congruity of written products improve, the associated processes will become more efficient and effective in meeting their objective.

Website

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. Available courses include:

- Effective Writing for Acquisitions (Course ID 337153)
- The Plain Writing Act (Course fgov_01_a30_lc_enus)
- Plain Language (Course ID 3281)
- Clarity and Conciseness in Business Writing (Course comm_51_a02_bs_enus)
- Communicating Effectively with Customers (Course acs_02_a02_bs_enus)
- Improving Your Technical Writing Skills
- Troublesome Words and Phrases: Common Mistakes in Writing
- Audience and Purpose in Business Writing
- Creating Well-Constructed Sentences

In fiscal year 2019, these courses were completed a total of 102 times.

Stakeholder Feedback

The NRC has a long-standing commitment to openness and transparency. Since the passage of the 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.