U.S.NRC
United States Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Protecting People and the Environment

Using Plain Language

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Regulatory Information Conference
2014

HANDOUT

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

First time U.S. made plain writing requirement a <u>law</u>.

(Not criminal; no penalties.)

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***Mostly* for federal benefits and services**

(Also, how to comply with general federal requirements)

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At the NRC, we apply plain writing standards to:

- Performance Assessments
- Generic Communications
- Inspection Reports
- Significant Enforcement Actions

When documents are necessarily technical, we use executive summaries.

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Writing in plain language is supported by the NRC Values and Principles of Good Regulation.

These include:

"Clarity"

"Openness"

"Transparency"

"Service"

"Respect"

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An example of "not plain writing" at the NRC and how we fix it.

Noun/Adjective Cluster

Before

"… a through-wall leak was identified in the body of a *Reactor Core Isolation Cooling System Steam Supply Inboard Isolation Bypass Warmup Valve.*"
(12 nouns/adjectives in a row!)

After

"… a bypass isolation valve for steam supply to Reactor Core Isolation Cooling,"

More "not plain writing."

Unnecessarily complex/obscure terms.

"energetic disassembly"   =   a fire

"high intensity heat event"   =   an explosion

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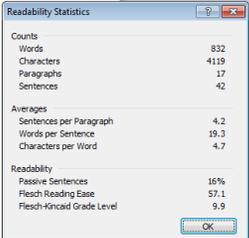NRC recognizes that clear, straightforward communication is essential for Public Confidence.

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Tools We Use at NRC to Promote Plain Writing

Readability Statistics in Microsoft Word

Readability Statistics

Counts
Words   832
Characters   4119
Paragraphs   17
Sentences   42

Averages
Sentences per Paragraph   4.2
Words per Sentence   19.3
Characters per Word   4.7

Readability
Passive Sentences   16%
Flesch Reading Ease   57.1
Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level   9.9

Tools We Use at NRC to Promote Plain Writing

In-house NRC editors

Tools We Use at NRC to Promote Plain Writing

Training Courses

- Writing in Plain Language (Instructor-led, 2 days)
- Technical Writing (Instructor-led, 2 days)
- Plain Language (Web-based, 45 minutes)
- Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely (Web-based, 1 hour)
- Business Grammar: Sentence Construction (Web-based, 1 hour)

U.S. Governmentwide Resource/Guidance

www.plainlanguage.gov

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"It's not about making the complex simple; it's about making the complex clear."

--Richard Grefe