U.S. Department of Energy
Plain Writing Act Compliance Report
April 15, 2025

I. Introduction

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) views the implementation of the Plain Writing Act as an important initiative that helps the Department share relevant information clearly and concisely. The areas referenced in this report summarize some of our continuing efforts to emphasize writing in Plain Language.

II. DOE Plain Language Officials

A. Ingrid Kolb, Director, Office of Management, Senior Agency Official Responsible for Plain Writing

B. Michael Coogan, Office of the Executive Secretariat, Plain Language Point-of-Contact

III. Examples of Agency Website Communications Available in a Format Consistent with the Plain Language Guidelines

A. *Office of Public Affairs*. The Office of Public Affairs manages DOE's public website – Energy.gov. Nearly 70 DOE staff and Program Offices have been consolidated from separate, stand-alone websites onto Energy.gov, allowing visitors to enter a search term and conveniently find relevant information.

The Office of Public Affairs' commitment to principles of open government and Plain Language is embodied throughout Energy.gov through:

- *Website Redesign.* In November 2024, the Office of Public Affairs launched a sitewide redesign of Energy.gov. The redesign allows visitors to see all major updates and publications related to a given topic in one place, rather than requiring visitors to navigate between multiple DOE program and staff office sites. The redesign shifts the way visitors find the information they are seeking. Previously, for example, information on solar power was nested within separate DOE program office websites, and visitors had to visit each website to obtain their information. The redesign is topic-based, meaning that all the information is in one place, by topic. Visitors simply enter the term "solar power" to obtain information without needing to visit different DOE websites.

- *Newsroom.* Press releases, statements, remarks, testimony, and newspaper opinion pieces (op-eds) from DOE leadership are written with Plain Language principles. Media resources are also available.

- *Blogs and Articles.* Blogs on Energy.gov highlight timely content featuring exciting innovations across DOE, from Program Offices to the National Laboratories. Energy.gov blogs and articles provide Plain Language summaries of complex scientific processes and discoveries in a conversational style for the public. Writers develop interactive content, such as timelines and quizzes, to explain topical energy concepts.

- *Training.* Contributors to Energy.gov are encouraged to follow the principles of Plain Language in the webpages they maintain. They receive content guidelines and training on using Plain Language and following web best practices for making content accessible.

- *Accessibility.* The Office of Public Affairs helped evaluate and implement a Section 508 tool called SiteImprove. This tool helps Energy.gov content owners identify broken links, misspellings, grammatical errors, and other accessibility/usability issues. The Office of Public Affairs is also ensuring that DOE's website redesign mentioned above is 508 compliant and built to U.S. Web Design Systems standards that improve the accessibility of DOE's site for many visitors.

- *Spanish Language Functionality.* The Office of Public Affairs is exploring longer term technical and resourcing solutions to better support Spanish language outreach and content development. While Energy.gov is a key part of this outreach, this will be a cross-cutting effort in partnership with the Office of the Chief Information Officer, Office of Management, and other DOE program and staff offices.

In addition to Energy.gov, the Office of Public Affairs oversees other Plain Language outreach tools to help non-technical, general audiences access government services, understand DOE's work and mission, and be informed on basic sciences and cutting-edge research. These tools include:

- *Social Media.* The Office of Public Affairs social media program aims to meet audiences where they are, on the platforms of their choice. The Office uses Plain Language on all social media accounts, converting complex, scientific information into easy-to-understand, bite-sized messages. Additionally, the Office provides style and editorial guidance to other DOE Program Offices and National Laboratories to encourage writers to use Plain Language for all social content.

Below is a snapshot of social media accounts currently maintained by the Office of Public Affairs, which manages several agency-level social media platforms, including:

ACCOUNT	FOLLOWERS (As of April 2025)
Energy X (Formerly Twitter)	831,700
Energy LinkedIn	308,000
Energy Facebook	166,000
Energy Instagram	159,000
SecretaryWright X (Formerly Twitter)	58,200
Energy YouTube — Subscribers	72,900
EnergyPress (ENERGYSpox) Twitter	24,000
SecretaryWright Instagram	2,061
Secretary Chris Wright Facebook	718

- *Video.* The Office of Public Affairs produces video content summarizing the Secretary of Energy's media interviews, speeches, travel, major announcements, and more. Through DOE's YouTube channel, the Office of Public Affairs also supports program and staff offices with their video and livestream needs, ensuring that content geared towards general and technical audiences is available in one, consolidated channel.

B. *U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA)*. EIA staff developed an in-house writing curriculum – a series of eight writing courses aptly named *Write Right.* In 2024, EIA trained 230 Federal employees and contractors under *Write Right*. Employees who attend these courses improve their Plain Language skills – punctuation, grammar, proofreading, and conciseness – and learn more about common writing mistakes and how to plan and revise their work. Each course is customized with EIA-relevant hands-on writing activities and EIA writing samples and focuses on areas where writers and their managers need to improve.

The success of this series is largely due to support from the agency administrator and other senior executives who strongly encouraged employees to attend and personally attended the sessions. The course topics included:

Course 1: Templates: Word Reports and PowerPoint Presentations (One hour)
— Review the agency requirements for preparing reports and presentations
— Understand how the templates work and their pre-programmed features
— Understand how the templates enhance Plain Language at EIA

Course 2: Press Releases and Social Media Content (1.5 hours)
— Review EIA's media policy
— Learn what to do when the press reaches out to you
— Learn basic tips on how to perform in an interview
— Understand exceptions to the *EIA Writing Style Guide* for social media content and press releases
— Discuss ways to make this specialized content accessible with Plain Language

Course 3: Understanding 508 Compliance at EIA (One hour)
— Understand the legal requirements for Federal agencies to provide electronic information and data accessible to those who have physical, sensory, or learning disabilities
— Review web page material and PDF documents, including text, tables, and figures, all of which are covered under the law

Course 4: Writing Effective Email (1.5 hours)
— Understand basic email structure to get the response you need from the recipient
— Review business email etiquette
— Understand the elements that affect tone
— Review how Plain Language writing and structure help the recipient find the important information and respond with the information you need

In addition, in 2024 EIA presented a course specifically tailored for the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) called *Fundamentals of Plain Writing at BPA* (BPA delivers reliable, affordable, and carbon-free hydropower to communities across the Pacific Northwest and is part of DOE). Using the four core *Write Right* classes, EIA customized a six-hour series with BPA writing samples that was presented in two three-hour sessions. In 2024, 55 BPA employees attended. Because demand for the class remained high, BPA scheduled two additional sessions in 2025. This writing series is the first Plain Language training BPA has offered to employees.

The *Write Right* curriculum is successful because EIA has made a serious commitment – in time, money, and enthusiasm – to helping staff write more effectively. As one

senior manager said, "We've definitely sent a signal that the agency is taking writing quite seriously and considers it a top priority."

From its nearly 70 reports published in 2024 on energy topics, EIA used Plain Language principles consistently throughout all web content, including its two annual flagship reports – the *Annual Energy Outlook* and *International Energy Outlook* – as well as its monthly *Short-Term Energy Outlook* and daily *Today in Energy*. The *Short-Term Energy Outlook* – a two-year forecast – includes two important supplements in the spring and winter: The *Summer Fuels Outlook* and the *Winter Fuels Outlook*. The winter supplement forecasts the heating fuel costs in the winter, important for consumers who use space heating in the winter. The summer supplement primarily discusses gasoline costs as it relates to summer-month fuel requirements.

Most EIA publications contain related infographics and social media campaigns that highlight for visitors – in simple and clear terms – notable and meaningful energy and forecasting data.

EIA's YouTube channel features informational videos in Plain Language on:
— Completing EIA surveys and forms
— Relevant energy topics
— Data tools and how to use them
— Webinars on pressing energy issues, and
— Product launch events with private sector partners, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies

EIA's website contains educational materials reflecting Plain Language principles, including:

- *Today in Energy*. These short articles use Plain Language along with graphics, photos, maps, and animations to educate the public on timely energy issues and topics. Every business day, EIA provides bite-sized pieces of information that readers can use in business, government, schools, and their personal lives. Energy experts explain topical data, reports, issues, and trends to build the public's understanding of energy issues.

  A revised *Today in Energy* product, eliminating redundancy and making timely information in one location readily available to readers, was launched in January 2024. The revised version features announcements, in-brief analysis, and in-depth analysis.

- *Energy Kids*. This student-friendly webpage provides opportunities – through information and activities – to learn about energy while improving research and reading skills. The teacher guide provides activities for teachers who use

Energy Kids as a resource to teach students about energy in a fun and interactive way.

- *Energy Explained.* This extensive resource describes the different sources and uses of energy in understandable, everyday language. EIA updated more than 178 Energy Explained pages in 2024.

- *Frequently Asked Questions.* This EIA resource provides answers in Plain Language to complicated questions about energy asked by the public and other stakeholders through EIA's website and other social media. EIA frequently updates the FAQ page to include the most current information and most popular inquiries. EIA updated all 99 FAQs in 2024.

- *Glossary.* Because EIA's content can be very technical, EIA maintains an extensive glossary of terms that EIA authors can use to hyperlink technical terms for readers who want more detailed explanations. The glossary is also a searchable tool web users can easily find on EIA.gov.

In 2024, EIA updated its homepage to make its information more accessible. The new homepage offers easier navigation, additional information, and a more streamlined, modern look. The "Data Highlights" section was moved closer to the top of the page so readers can quickly scan and assess the latest data. EIA changed the font to create more white space and make the text more reader friendly. EIA also redesigned many of its web pages to improve navigation and make information more accessible.

In 2023, EIA reached out to its Short-Term Energy Outlook (STEO) audience and conducted an external survey asking readers how they use the STEO and how EIA can better meet their needs. Calling it the *Short-Term Energy Outlook Rethink Project,* EIA saw this as an opportunity to revamp the STEO based on user feedback. As a result of its findings, EIA launched an enhanced version of the STEO, which now includes a recap of previously published content and a broader range of analysis based on reader needs.

As several extreme weather events affect large areas of the country, EIA publishes real time and retrospective analysis of these energy disruptions in easy-to-understand formats for the public. In 2024, EIA helped customers track the impacts of how severe weather disrupted energy infrastructure and markets.

In 2024, EIA launched a new electricity dashboard focusing solely on renewable energy. This dashboard consolidates five maps (biomass, geothermal, wind, solar, and hydroelectric) into one new product that includes maps, charts, and tables. Users can select and filter by state or renewable source.

EIA uses social media to promote *Today in Energy* stories and newly published reports and analyses, and is active on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn, and YouTube. EIA social media statistics from April 2024 to March 2025:

ACCOUNT	FOLLOWERS (As of April 2025)
EIA X (Formerly Twitter)	181,000
EIA Facebook	45,000
EIA LinkedIn	30,615
EIA X (Formerly Twitter) (Administrator)	4,800

EIA data show the audience for these social platforms is significantly larger than the number of followers.

EIA uses social media to connect consumers with useful EIA tools, such as the Hourly Electric Grid Monitor, the Status of U.S. Nuclear Outages page, and the Flood Vulnerability Assessment Map.

EIA continues to enhance its ability to respond to electricity emergencies with the Energy Disruptions webpage, hurricane status reports, and *Today in Energy* articles that provide information on a storm's potential to disrupt the energy system and analyses of the resulting impacts after landfall.

C. ***Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE)***. More than 50 percent of all Energy.gov visitors viewed EERE webpages in 2024. To reach the widest possible audience, EERE uses Plain Language throughout its website, including:

  — Why Energy Innovation Matters
  — Myth Busting with EERE
  — Do-It-Yourself Energy Savers Projects

In addition to providing content on renewable energy and energy efficiency basics, EERE's webpages reflect Plain Language guidelines and best practices in user experience. Notable examples include:

- *Why Energy Innovation Matters*. EERE explains the drive behind its work to a general audience by using a question-and-answer format. These web pages are favored by AI when people use search engines to learn about terms like "energy reliability," "energy resilience," "reduced energy costs," and "energy independence."

- *Advanced by Americans Profiles.* This feature spotlights the positive impact of EERE's funding on American businesses and innovators. Each article shows the personal side of a business that received EERE funding.

- *Energy Saver Webpage.* This webpage provides practical, easy-to-understand consumer advice for saving energy. Energy Saver content is written in Plain Language to help consumers understand energy-saving options for their homes and vehicles. Energy Saver suggests do-it-yourself projects and offers tax credit and incentive information to engage the public and assist with energy-saving actions. Interactive content, such as the Energy Efficient House Tour, guides visitors through potential home efficiency upgrades.

- *Energy Innovation in Action Blog.* This blog discusses renewable energy and energy efficient technologies in easy-to-understand language. By busting the myths of common misconceptions, highlighting changes to energy policy, summarizing research findings, and celebrating successful energy innovation, EERE engages the public in a conversational manner.

- *EERE Funding Webpage.* EERE centralizes information about open funding programs and upcoming opportunities in one location. The content is structured to quickly funnel users to more detailed information about current funding opportunities, prioritizing programs with upcoming deadlines.

- *How Do Wind Turbines Work?* This popular EERE webpage provides an easy-to-understand explanation of how wind turbines operate and defines technical terms in Plain Language. The initial success of this webpage inspired other EERE webpages to follow suit, including the page *How Does Solar Work?*

- *The Spark Squad Comic Books.* This webpage provides children and families with engaging and fun content that encourages children to explore water power technologies and nuclear energy. The mission of the Spark Squad is to inspire students to explore energy technologies and join the next generation of the energy workforce.

- *Social Media Posts.* EERE manages three primary social media accounts that reach audiences such as students, job seekers, and industry representatives in shared online communities. In 2024, EERE's main social media accounts gained about 5,000 new followers. But notably, EERE increased its "engagement rate" – visitors who either liked a post, shared it, or commented on it – by 20 percent.

ACCOUNT	FOLLOWERS (As of April 2025)
EERE Facebook	171,000
EERE LinkedIn	46,300
EERE X (Formerly Twitter)	24,200

- *508 Compliant Infographics.* EERE condenses highly technical information about renewable energy topics into simple and accessible infographics used for multiple purposes, including social media posts, reports, and webpages. Infographics are readable by a screen reader.

- *Communication Standards* webpages. EERE includes guidelines for content writers and editors and a section explaining the Plain Writing Act and its requirements. The Communication Standards section also includes *EERE's style guide* and guidelines to ensure content is 508 compliant and accessible to those with disabilities.

- *Communication Product Templates.* EERE provides a large assortment of Adobe InDesign, Microsoft PowerPoint, and Microsoft Word templates for internal users to develop high-quality products. The InDesign templates include one-pagers, scientific and technical reports, and more.

- *DOE Web Council.* EERE participates in the DOE Web Council, which meets monthly to address common issues, including ways to comply with the Plain Writing Act.

D. *National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA).* The NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within DOE, responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains multiple websites that follow Plain Language principles. NNSA's primary website – Energy.gov/nnsa – is regularly updated with press releases, articles, infographics, animations and videos, newsletters, fact sheets, and other documents. This information highlights NNSA's mission and activities, including areas such as stockpile stewardship and nuclear nonproliferation. The website also provides information on NNSA careers and structure, and links to NNSA's social media channels (Facebook, X, YouTube, LinkedIn, Threads, and Instagram).

NNSA also maintains a Directives website that serves as a content and document management system for policies and procedures.

NNSA's websites reflect Plain Language principles that give the public a better understanding of NNSA's programs, such as:

- *Stockpile Stewardship and Management Plan.* This report describes NNSA's efforts to maintain and modernize scientific tools, capabilities, and infrastructure to ensure the success of NNSA's nuclear weapons mission.

- *Prevent, Counter, and Respond – A Strategic Plan to Reduce Global Nuclear Threats.* This report describes NNSA's planning and program activities on U.S. national security and advance global nuclear security. The report uses Plain Language principles to clearly define and describe its missions to prevent, counter, and respond to the threats of nuclear proliferation and terrorism.

- *Fact Sheets.* NNSA produces numerous fact sheets that outline its weapon life extension programs, important missions, other important public-facing documents, and material for the media. The fact sheets follow Plain Language principles.

- *Top 10.* This page provides users with the ten most frequently accessed policies and directives from the preceding month.

E. ***Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO).*** Information and technology help DOE meet its mission in energy, science, and nuclear security. The OCIO's programs span all these areas.

The OCIO also maintains the Department's internal Powerpedia wiki, which has a section educating staff on how to use Plain Language (see below, section V, part B). The OCIO uses Plain Language to convey technical and operational concepts.

The OCIO also partners with the Office of Public Affairs and the DOE Web Council to regularly bring Plain Language concepts to web content managers across the agency.

IV. Examples of Other Agency Communications Consistent with the Plain Language Guidelines

Office of the Executive Secretariat. The Office of the Executive Secretariat oversees Secretarial correspondence and most DOE Congressional Reports. The office provides DOE guidance on these documents consistent with the Plain Writing Act and reviews documents for consistency with the Act's guidelines.

V. Informing Agency Staff of the Plain Writing Act's Requirements

A. DOE's Open Government website contains links to the agency's current and previous *Plain Writing Act Compliance Reports*.

B. The Department's internal wiki – Powerpedia – has a page that promotes the use of Plain Language throughout the Department. Through the wiki, DOE lists resources and information, including:

- Embedded YouTube videos from the Plain Language Action Information Network that highlight best practices for clear writing

- Schedules for Plain Language Training classes and opportunities to register for them

- Guidelines and links for writing in Plain Language

- Before and after Plain Language examples

C. The Department has an internal portal, *The Energy Hub,* which organizes content from DOE's complex web of internal systems into a clean, intuitive "front door." *The Energy Hub* is user-friendly and makes it easy for Department employees and contractors to find essential information, tools, and resources.

VI. Training

Plain Language training has been a staple at DOE since 2011. Initially directed toward its headquarters personnel in the District and Germantown, Maryland, training for employees and contractors expanded to the Department's laboratories and field offices across the country via video conferencing in 2013. Plain Language training expanded further when laboratories and field offices began requesting in-person instruction in 2015. Virtual training was added in 2022. All classes are led by an in-house agency instructor.

DOE personnel have fully embraced Plain Language training. The Department holds open classes for employees and contractors in groups of 20-30, as well as DOE Program Offices when they request training as a group.

The Plain Language training specifics from April 2024 to March 2025:

	Classes	Participants
In-Person DC Headquarters (Forrestal Building)*	4	119
In-Person Germantown, Maryland**	3	56
Virtual Instruction Requested by DOE Program Offices and Sites***	8	231
In-Person Instruction at the Office of Science Consolidated Service Center, IL	1	27
In-Person Instruction at the Hanford Site, Richland, WA	1	22
TOTAL**	**17**	**455**

*   *Includes two open classes; one class requested by the National Nuclear Security Administration; and one by the Office of Information Management.*

**   *Includes one class requested by each of the following: Office of Environmental Management, Office of Information Management, and Office of Science.*

***   *One class was requested by each of the following: the Manufacturing and Energy Supply Chain Office; the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy's Workforce Management Office at the Golden Field Office; and the Office of State and Community Energy Programs' Weatherization Assistance Program. Two classes were requested by the Office of Human Resources Operations and Compensation at Oak Ridge, and three classes by the Grid Deployment Office.*

**** *The "Total" figures do not include the BPA training classes mentioned on page 4.*

The Department promotes Plain Language training to all employees and contractors at both its DC headquarters and Germantown facility through the monthly electronic Secretary's newsletter and promotional flyers at key building locations. The DC Headquarters also promotes the classes through its two in-house electronic billboards. At Department sites across the country, points-of-contact promote Plain Language training to their colleagues.

DOE's Plain Language classes provide tools that allow writers to present information more clearly, including:

- Focusing on the reader when you write

- Writing not what you want to say, but what the reader needs to know

- Using active voice and not passive voice, and how to distinguish between the two

- Limiting jargon and acronyms

- Avoiding hidden verbs

- Using pronouns and short, simple words

- Shortening sentences and paragraphs

- Identifying your audience

- Using lists (bullets, numbers, letters) and tables instead of long-form paragraphs

- Using formatting techniques (headings, additional white space between lines) to make your document easier to read, allowing readers to more easily absorb information

VII. Ongoing Compliance/Sustaining Change

A. All DOE employees and contractors are encouraged to incorporate Plain Language principles in their writing. Some Program Offices have developed style guides that

support Plain Language concepts (The Energy Information Administration's *Writing Style Guide* is one example). Some offices, such as the Office of the Chief Information Officer and the Energy Information Administration, also integrate Plain Language concepts into their document review process.

The Office of the Executive Secretariat incorporates Plain Language standards in its review of DOE documents and external correspondence and works with Program Offices to emphasize Plain Language principles.

B. Both the Department's Powerpedia internal wiki – and its internal portal, *The Energy Hub* – have an Acronyms List that identifies Department-related acronyms for readers and provides the acronym's description.

C. Plain Language training is ongoing for DOE's DC headquarters and its Germantown facility, as well as sites across the country.

VIII. DOE Plain Language Websites/Links

A. DOE's Plain Language webpage

B. The Plain Language page on Powerpedia, DOE's internal wiki site

C. The Plain Language page on *The Energy Hub,* DOE's internal portal

D. DOE's link on its internal Plain Language website to Federal Plain Language Guidelines

E. DOE's link on its Plain Language website to the Plain Language Action Information Network

F. The Energy Information Administration's *Writing Style Guide* and its one-page tip sheet

IX. Customer Satisfaction Evaluation after Experiencing Plain Language Communications

The Department continues to monitor and optimize how Energy.gov is serving consumers, businesses, governments, educators, researchers, and the public. As DOE places increasing emphasis on mobile-friendly online content, Plain Language principles become more critical in meeting the agency's communications needs.

A. The Office of Public Affairs continuously updates the Energy.gov homepage and Energy 101 content to be responsive to user interest. The Office uses social media and multimedia data analytics to determine which topics audiences are interested in and develop outreach.

B. In 2022, the Energy Information Administration (EIA) working group made significant updates to its *Writing Style Guide* based on its writers' experiences and best practices in Plain Language and the energy trade press. The style guide focuses on creating reader-centric content in a conversational, relevant voice that aligns with energy trade press. EIA updates the guide annually based on employee feedback and style guide workgroup approval.

EIA's style guide is its central document for Plain Language, and employees use the guide for help and advice on EIA writing style, grammar tips, and writing clearly. Many EIA employees also post the *Writing Style Guide's* tip sheet on their office walls and doors. *EIA's style guide* won a ClearMark Award from the Center for Plain Language.

C. The attendance numbers for EIA's *Write Right* curriculum show that the courses are popular. Comments on the evaluation surveys indicate that participants found the training informative and useful.

EIA's annual web customer satisfaction survey conducted in August 2024 showed that 94 percent of 17,053 respondents indicated they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the quality of the information on EIA's website. When asked about the overall experience with navigation and design, 91 percent were "satisfied" or "very satisfied." This survey also collects information on who is visiting the website and the information they are seeking.

Other EIA product-specific surveys collect information on how customers use a particular product, if the customer finds it useful, and how EIA can improve it.

D. For the sixth consecutive year, a member of DOE's Plain Language Working Group served as a judge for the Center for Plain Language's ClearMark Awards, which showcases the best in Plain Language communication.

E. For three years, another member of DOE's Plain Language Working Group served as a judge for the Center for Plain Language's *Federal Plain Language Report Card*. The judges brought their expertise and knowledge of Plain Language principles to the judging process, while gaining greater insight on how Federal Government websites can use Plain Language to convey their messages more clearly to the public.