

U.S. Department of Energy
**Plain Writing Act
Compliance Report**
July 13, 2011

I. SENIOR AGENCY OFFICIAL FOR PLAIN WRITING

Senior Official for Plain Writing: Ingrid Kolb
Director, Office of Management

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II. TO DATE, DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY (DOE) COMMUNICATIONS RELEASED IN PLAIN LANGUAGE

- DOE website overhaul includes a focus on Plain Writing, geared toward the public and DOE employees.
- DOE Powerpedia Page (DOE's internal Wikipedia site) shares information – in plain language – with employees and contractors.
- All correspondence for Congress, stakeholders, and others that is reviewed by the Office of Executive Secretariat is reviewed for Plain Language.

III. INFORM AGENCY STAFF OF PLAIN WRITING ACT'S REQUIREMENTS

The Department of Energy's *Strategic Plan*, released in May 2011, states that the Department is committed to being more open and more accessible to the American people; and that we have significantly expanded the amount of information available online about our programs, our funding awards, and our progress.

In support of our *Strategic Plan* and the *Plain Writing Act of 2010*, a Plain Writing Working Group, composed of representatives from key offices involved with this effort, will help identify the universe that will benefit most from Plain Language training. To seek support for DOE's plain language efforts, we have been working with the following groups and outreach tools:

- *DOE Leadership*: This includes DOE Program Office leadership, as well as the Under Secretaries of Energy, Science, and Nuclear Security.

- *Correspondence Contacts*: Share information with Executive Secretariat (ES) Correspondence Contacts (in all Program Offices) about the availability of Plain Language classes and ask for their help identifying writers in their areas.
- *Office of Human Capital*: This office has agreed to work with their training contacts in each DOE Program Office to compile a list of writers, and on training plan development.
- *DOE-Wide Email*: E-mail all DOE employees about Plain Language and training opportunities.
- *Powerpedia (the Department's internal Wiki site)*: Use the Plain Language page on Powerpedia as a repository for information on the DOE Plain Language Training Program, resource documents, and additional information. Updated Executive Secretariat guidance on Powerpedia will include an emphasis on Plain Language.
- *ES Blog*: Use the Office of Executive Secretariat Blog, *ES Breaking News*, to promote training opportunities, and plain language education.
- *DOE Website*: Provide information to the community outside the Department via the DOE Plain Language website.

IV. TRAINING

Plain Language training will be offered to all employees monthly at first and then quarterly after an initial training period has been established. Classes will be promoted with special outreach to those identified as key writers.

- An initial class for general writers is scheduled for August 31, 2011, and will be conducted by a representative of the Plain Language Initiative. Subsequent Plain Language classes will be taught by DOE employees.
- A Plain Language class for regulatory writers is scheduled for August 17, 2011. This class will be conducted by a Senior Regulatory Analyst for a Federal agency.

Information on Plain Language training will be provided to all new DOE employees as part of their orientation materials.

Once initial trainings have been completed, training will be offered on a regular basis. Key individuals within each Program Office will be identified, recruited, and trained to be Plain Language instructors. This will help institutionalize Plain Language at DOE.

V. ONGOING COMPLIANCE/SUSTAINING CHANGE

Our goal is to institutionalize Plain Language training at the Department of Energy by training key individuals within each Program Office, and relying on them to promote Plain Language within their organizations.

To track compliance with the requirements of the Plain Writing Act of 2010, the Office of the Executive Secretariat will maintain a number of metrics, including the number of people trained, page visits on the Plain Language Powerpedia page, and comments received in response to the trainings and implementation plan.

Compliance Officer: Michael Coogan, Office of Executive Secretariat, 202-586-5089.

VI. AGENCY'S PLAIN WRITING WEBSITE

- a. Website address: <http://energy.gov/open/index.htm>
- b. Contact us at: <http://energy.gov/open/10293.htm>
- c. Plain Language Website: www.plainlanguage.gov
- d. The Plain Writing Act: http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h946enr.txt.pdf
- e. OMB Plain Writing Guidance: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-15.pdf>
- f. In implementing its Plain Writing Plan, the Department will focus on those materials identified as covered documents in the guidance provided by OMB. As such, DOE will use Plain Writing in every letter, publication, form, notice, or instruction, and will take into account the subject expertise of the intended audience. DOE materials covered by the Plain Writing Act include (but are not limited to):
 - Funding Opportunity Announcements
 - Preambles for Regulatory requirements
 - All DOE public communications
 - Information about any DOE benefit or service
 - DOE-sponsored events, such as the National Science Bowl, Solar Decathlon, and meetings and conferences
 - DOE publications and reports to Congress

VII. CUSTOMER SATISFACTION EVALUATION AFTER EXPERIENCING PLAIN WRITING COMMUNICATIONS

The Plain Writing Act calls for “documentation on how you have measured the effectiveness of your use of Plain Writing in your communication with the public both by hard copy and through

posting information on your Agency’s website. Provide feedback as to user experience in identifying any noticeable change in comprehension and improved level of service.”

Feedback provided on the Office of Executive Secretariat Blog and Powerpedia will help determine the effectiveness of Plain Language training and be included in the Plain Language Implementation Report.