

Plain Writing Act Compliance Annual Report April 24, 2013

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 are reminded to use plain language through periodic articles in the agency's in-house newsletter, the *NRC Reporter*. The Commission has also directed staff to make greater use of plain language when speaking to the public about high profile events, such as the nuclear accident at Fukushima-Daiichi in Japan. Glenn Ellmers, the agency's Plain Writing staff lead, gives regular briefings at office-wide meetings, branch-wide meetings, meetings of branch chiefs and first-line supervisors, and other groups. This month, the Executive Director will be issuing new 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 (see below). Finally, Chairman Macfarlane has made plain writing at the NRC a personal cause and mentions the topic frequently when addressing the staff at meetings or in groups.

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. We are also considering focusing on the following items: Regulation Abstracts, Regulation Forwards, Information Papers, and Agency Policy Statements.

Web site

Consistent with the Act's requirements, the NRC created a section of our public website that 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 are encouraged to take the basic courses. Employees who write documents read by the public are encouraged to take the more extensive training options. These courses include:

- 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)

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 new subscription-based services on our public Web site to enable stakeholders to keep abreast of the most 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 within industry and Government workgroups by using Web conferencing technologies. We have also introduced new interactive mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, including four successful social media technologies: the NRC Blog, a Twitter feed, a YouTube channel, and a Flickr photo gallery.