

# Plain Writing Act Compliance Report – April 10, 2015

This report outlines the progress towards implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010 within the Department of Defense.

## I. Senior Agency Official

Michael L. Rhodes, Director of Administration, Office of the Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO) of the Department of Defense, is the DoD Senior Official for plain language. The Washington Headquarters Services, Directives Division, oversees implementation and administration of the DoD Plain Language Program through the plain language point of contact. The point of contact may be reached at [whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil](mailto:whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil).

## II. Using Plain Language

DoD received no plain language amendment requests in 2014.

DoD agencies took many actions to implement plain language requirements in 2014.

- DoD
  - Writing style guides and plain language resources on the DoD Plain Language Website are available to action officers who write policy documents.
  - The DoD Plain Language Committee met to discuss implementation of the DoD Plain Writing Act Implementation Plan, DoD Instruction 5025.13, and to share ideas and information.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
  - The DFAS Corporate Communications Office either prepares or reviews all official customer communications for message clarity and ease of understanding. These include articles, videos, letter and email content for public release, web content, and Facebook posts.
  - The DFAS Forms and Publications Office launched a Publication Toolkit. The Toolkit refers employees to plain writing style guides.
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). DLA is developing two documents that will direct DLA Directors to write their organizational issuances and other work-related documents (especially “covered” documents, as defined in the Plain Writing Act) in plain language. DLA writers and editors will follow the federal plain language guidance.
- Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA). DTRA developed tent cards containing plain language principles and hands them out to personnel who prepare and review correspondence. DTRA also promotes awareness of plain language by placing these cards in meeting rooms. DTRA continually updates their website to reflect the latest guidance and information on plain language requirements.

- Department of the Air Force. The Air Force is revising their writing guide, the Tongue and Quill. They will clarify responsibilities for implementing plain language in a future Air Force supplement to DoD Instruction 5025.13.
- Office of the Director of Administration, DCMO
  - Staff and editors in the Directives Division use plain language guidelines when reviewing and revising publications that establish and implement DoD policy.
  - Plain language is emphasized in DoD issuance process training classes and Writing DoD Issuances classes offered to DoD action officers.
  - The standards and templates for DoD issuances were evaluated and changed to improve use of plain language and will be implemented in May 2015.

### **III. Communication of Requirements**

Communication about the Act's implementation, plain language guidelines, and compliance requirements is provided to the DoD workforce through:

- Publication of the DoD Plain Writing Act implementation plan, known as DoD Instruction 5025.13. It is available on the DoD Issuances Website at <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives>.
- Distribution of memorandums from the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of the Secretary of Defense.
- Meetings of the DoD Plain Language Committee, which consists of representatives from different organizations within the DoD.
- Training and helpful resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website and individual agency websites.
- Notices placed in various public forums such as:
  - DoD newspapers
  - DoD newsletters
  - Mass electronic information systems

### **IV. Training**

- DoD
  - DoD is developing a plain language training course. It is currently being tested and will be available on the DoD Plain Language Website by May 2015.
  - DoD organizations that already have internal training available will incorporate plain language guidance in those programs.
  - DoD organizations that do not have internal training will use either the DoD plain language training (when available) or the resources available on the DoD Plain Language Website.

- Office of the Washington Headquarters Services, DCMO. The Human Resources Division of Washington Headquarters Services offers a 3-day plain writing course to DoD personnel.
- Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA)
  - The Defense Contract Audit Institute (DCAI) trained 158 employees in plain writing concepts.
  - DCAA Policy Division staff members were trained in plain writing concepts to improve audit guidance documents.
  - DCAA will focus on updating the DCAI Audit Report Writing Course to increase the focus on plain writing concepts. Audit reports are the basic product of DCAA. Poorly written audit reports can result in the inability of a contractor to understand and act on the recommendations in DCAA audits. Poorly written reports can also contribute to excess costs and litigation.
  - DCAA is also developing an online communication course available to all DCAA employees that contains a large focus on plain writing concepts.
- Defense Contract Management Agency. The Defense Contract Management Agency is developing a plain language training program and will have it in place by the fourth quarter of this fiscal year.
- Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS)
  - DFAS provides 11 related training courses in its annual course curriculum that emphasize key principles of the DoD Plain Language Program. These courses cover the Plain Writing Act, document planning, business writing, technical writing, and general writing techniques.
  - DFAS provides plain language training for 20 agency newsletter editors.
  - One DFAS employee finished certification requirements to become a plain language trainer.
- Defense Logistics Agency (DLA). The DLA Policy Management and DLA Training offices collaborated to develop plain language courses for DLA leaders, managers, and employees. Among them are plain language training, a required introductory course for all DLA personnel, and a course on writing effectively in DLA, an optional course for DLA writers and editors. The introductory course is available online while the other course is a two-day instructor-led course.
- Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The Joint Staff Training Program facilitated an active response writing program as a part of formal action officer and division chief introductory training. The responsive writing point of contact also facilitated formal individual and group training for select Joint Staff personnel. In 2014, 574 Joint Staff personnel received formal writing instruction.
- United States Northern Command/North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD). United States Northern Command and NORAD trained 407 individuals in

2014. Individuals are introduced to plain language concepts at the Newcomers Orientation Program.

- United States Transportation Command. United States Transportation Command conducts in-house plain language training.

## **V. Ongoing Compliance/Sustaining Change**

The DoD is working towards full compliance with the Act and has fulfilled requirements such as:

- Publishing the DoD Plain Writing Act Implementation Plain, DoD Instruction 5025.13.
- Maintaining the DoD Plain Language Website.
- Designating a senior official for plain language.
- Encouraging feedback from the public and stakeholders to identify communications that require improvements.
- Publishing the annual compliance report on the DoD Plain Language Website.

## **VI. Website:** <http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/plainlanguage.html>

Information about the Act and its requirements; implementation plans and compliance resources, and compliance reports may be found on the DoD Plain Language Website. The site also provides an easy way for the public to contact the DoD should they have questions or request the revision of documents that are not in plain language. Any input received through the site will be considered and identified documents will be reviewed and revised, if necessary.

## **VII Customer Satisfaction**

We want your input. Feedback is critical to help us know whether or not we have been successful in providing information that is clear and well-organized, for its intended audience.

Comments, questions, and concerns may be sent to [whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil](mailto:whs.mc-alex.esd.mbx.dod-plain-language@mail.mil).