



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, D.C. 20240

Memorandum

JUN 10 1998

To: Solicitor
Assistant Secretaries
Heads of Bureaus and Offices

From: Chief of Staff

Subject: Executive Memorandum on Plain Language in Government Writing

On June 1, 1998, President Clinton issued an Executive Memorandum directing Executive Departments and Agencies to use plain language in all Government writing. For your convenience, I have attached a copy of this memorandum.

The memorandum recognizes that plain language essentials will vary according to the audience, but notes that all plain language documents have logical organization, easy-to-read design features, and use:

- common, everyday words, except for necessary technical terms;
- “you” and other personal pronouns;
- the active voice; and
- short sentences.

The memorandum directs the following:

- **By October 1, 1998, agencies must use plain language in all new documents, other than regulations, that explain how members of the public can obtain a benefit or service or how to comply with agency requirements. By January 1, 2002, all documents created prior to October 1, 1998, and still in force must be written in plain language as well.**
- **By January 1, 1999, agencies must use plain language in all proposed and final rulemaking documents published in the Federal Register.**

As you know, the Department has been in the forefront of the plain English/plain language initiative since its inception. After extensive consultations with the bureaus, we recently revised and issued our Departmental Manual instructions on rulemaking documents (318 DM 1-9. Federal

Register Documents, Release Nos. 3205-3213, effective May 14, 1998); Julie Falkner will provide your regulatory contacts with a copy of this manual as soon as it becomes available. As a result of our discussions with the bureaus, 318 DM now requires the use of plain English in all rulemaking documents. While the President's memorandum provides an exception from the plain language requirement for rules proposed prior to January 1, 1999, we will not use that exception and drafters of rules should follow the guidance on plain English in 318 DM 4.2. If you have any questions regarding this policy, please contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs at 208-3181.

We thank you for your assistance in advancing this important initiative.

Attachment

cc: Bureau Regulatory Contacts