

Write Plainly:

An Update on Plain Writing Principles and the New Law

Leslie O'Flahavan, E-WRITE
Web Manager University
January 21, 2011

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Webinar overview

- The principles of plain language
- How to edit content according to plain language principles
- How the Plain Writing Act could affect your agency's operations
- Where to find additional plain language training and resources

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Today's presenters:

Leslie O'Flahavan

- E-WRITE
- Faculty – Web Manager University



Kathryn Catania

- Web Content Editor with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
- Co-Chair of the [Plain Language Action and Information Network](#)



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Webinar overview

- **Part 1: The principles of plain language**
- Part 2: How to edit content according to plain language principles
- Part 3: How the Plain Writing Act could affect your agency's operations
- Part 4: Where to find additional plain language training and resources

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What is plain language?

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Plain language is a communication philosophy

- “Plain language...is communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it.”
- “A communication is in plain language if the...audience for that communication can quickly and easily
 - find what they need
 - understand what they find
 - act appropriately on that understanding”

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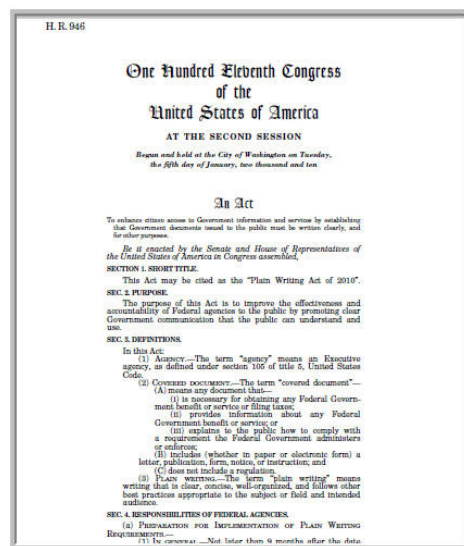
Plain language is a community

- Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN)
- Federal agencies with plain language programs
 - U.S Citizenship and Immigration Services
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Environmental Protection Agency
 - Federal Aviation Administration
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Health Resources and Services Administration
 - National Institutes of Health
 - Office of the Federal Register
 - Securities and Exchange Commission
- Plain Language Awards
 - Center for Plain Language's ClearMark Award
 - Legal Writing Institute's Golden Pen Award
 - NIH's Plain Language Initiative's annual award

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Plain language: It's the law



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Plain language shapes writers' decisions at every stage of the writing process

- Planning stage
 - Does this content meet an actual need?
 - Have the writers anticipated readers' questions?
 - Does it have a clear message?
 - Will it enable readers to take action?
- Drafting stage
 - Is the content broken into logical units or chunks?
 - Does the content offer the right amount and type of information; does it answer readers' questions?
 - Does it include headings that will enable readers to scan?
- Reviewing stage
 - Is the writing concise? Is the wording concrete?
 - Will readers understand the jargon or acronyms?
 - Are the sentences written in active voice?

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Plain language:
We know it when we see it

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Not plain language

Local Veterans Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers to engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment.

Why is this not plain?

Local Veterans Employment Representatives conduct outreach to employers to engage in advocacy efforts with hiring executives to increase employment opportunities for veterans, encourage the hiring of disabled veterans and generally assist veterans to gain and retain employment.

Plain language rewrite

Local Veterans Employment
Representatives contact employers to
encourage them to hire veterans, including
disabled veterans, and generally assist
veterans in finding and keeping jobs.

Questions?

Webinar overview

- Part 1: The principles of plain language
- **Part 2: How to edit content according to plain language principles**
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How to edit content according to plain language principles

Write Plainly: An Update on Plain Writing Principles and the New Law

Before the January 21 webinar, please review these before-and-after examples of government content written in plain language.

1. **Plainlanguage.gov's Before-and-After Examples Database**
 - [Revised section of the Army's Information Security Program Handbook](#)
 - [FAA's Airworthy Directives Regulation: 14 CFR Part 39](#)
2. **NIH's Office of Extramural Research**
 - [Plain Language in NIH Applications: Before and After Examples](#) (Read Example 3)
3. **Center for Plain Language's 2010 ClearMark Award Winner for Revised Document: Public Sector**
 - Washington State Department of Labor and Industries's Plain Talk for Public Records – Revised Confirmation Letters: [Before](#) and [After](#)
4. **Florida Department of Children and Families**
Examples of government documents re-written using plain language techniques:
 - [Family Safety](#)

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Army's Information Security Program Handbook - Before

Methods of Transmission or Transportation: 7-301. Secret Information.

Administrative procedures shall be established by each DoD Component for controlling Secret information and material originated or received by an activity; distributed or routed to a sub-element of such activity; and disposed of by the activity by transfer of custody or destruction. The control system for Secret information must be determined by a practical balance of security and operating efficiency and must meet the following minimum requirements:

- a. It must provide a means to ensure that Secret material sent outside a major subordinate element (the activity) of the DoD Component concerned has been delivered to the intended recipient...
- b. It must provide a record of receipt and dispatch of Secret material by each major subordinate element. The dispatch record requirement may be satisfied when the distribution of Secret material is evident and addressees or distribution lists for classified documentation...
- c. Records of receipt and dispatch for Secret material shall be retained for a minimum of 2 years...

Army's Information Security Program Handbook - After

Transmission, Methods: 4-102. Secret.

- A. You may send secret information by U.S. Registered Postal Service mail within and between the United States and its Territories.
- B. You may use Federal Express and U.S. Post Service Express Mail for transmitting secret mail within the United States and between the United States and its Territories under the following STRICT condition security:
 1. Mail should meet the weight and size limits of the carrier used.
 2. You should follow the inner wrappings and receipt requirements in this handbook.
 3. You should ensure delivery by Friday so that the carrier is not in possession of the package over the weekend.

FAA's Airworthy Directives Regulation: 14 CFR Part 39 - Before

TITLE 14--AERONAUTICS AND SPACE

CHAPTER I--FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION, DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

PART 39--AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES--

Table of Contents

Subpart A--General

Sec. 39. 1 Applicability. This part prescribes airworthiness directives that apply to aircraft, aircraft engines, propellers, or appliances (hereinafter referred to in this part as "products") when-- (a) An unsafe condition exists in a product; and (b) That condition is likely to exist or develop in other products of the same type design. [Doc. No. 5061, 29 FR 14403, Oct. 20, 1964, as amended by Amdt. 39-106, 30 FR 8826, July 14, 1965]

Sec. 39. 3 General. No person may operate a product to which an airworthiness directive applies except in accordance with the requirements of that airworthiness directive.

Subpart B--Airworthiness Directives

Sec. 39. 11 Applicability. This subpart identifies those products in which the Administrator has found an unsafe condition as described in Sec. 39.1 and, as appropriate, prescribes inspections and the conditions and limitations, if any, under which those products may continue to be operated.

Sec. 39. 13 Airworthiness directives. All airworthiness directives contained in Sec. 507.10 of the regulations of the Administrator are hereby transferred to this section of the Federal Aviation Regulations. Editorial Note: Airworthiness directives prescribed under this subpart were published in full in the Federal Register at 21 FR 9449, Dec. 4, 1956. For Federal Register citations to amendments in 1957 and subsequent years, see former Sec. 507.10 of this title, in a separate volume entitled "List of Sections Affected 1949-1963." See also Sec. 39. 13 in a separate volume entitled "List of CFR Sections Affected, 1964-1972 and 1973-1985," and the List of CFR Sections Affected at the end of this volume.

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FAA's Airworthy Directives Regulation: 14 CFR Part 39 - After

Title 14: Aeronautics and Space

PART 39--AIRWORTHINESS DIRECTIVES

Authority: 49 U.S.C. 106(g), 40113, 44701.

Source: Doc. No. FAA-2000-8460, 67 FR 48003, July 22, 2002, unless otherwise noted.

§ 39.1 Purpose of this regulation.

The regulations in this part provide a legal framework for FAA's system of Airworthiness Directives.

§ 39.3 Definition of airworthiness directives.

FAA's airworthiness directives are legally enforceable rules that apply to the following products: aircraft, aircraft engines, propellers, and appliances.

§ 39.5 When does FAA issue airworthiness directives?

FAA issues an airworthiness directive addressing a product when we find that:

- (a) An unsafe condition exists in the product; and
- (b) The condition is likely to exist or develop in other products of the same type design.

§ 39.7 What is the legal effect of failing to comply with an airworthiness directive?

Anyone who operates a product that does not meet the requirements of an applicable airworthiness directive is in violation of this section.

§ 39.9 What if I operate an aircraft or use a product that does not meet the requirements of an airworthiness directive?

If the requirements of an airworthiness directive have not been met, you violate §39.7 each time you operate the aircraft or use the product.

§ 39.11 What actions do airworthiness directives require?

Airworthiness directives specify inspections you must carry out, conditions and limitations you must comply with, and any actions you must take to resolve an unsafe condition.

§ 39.13 Are airworthiness directives part of the Code of Federal Regulations?

Yes, airworthiness directives are part of the Code of Federal Regulations, but they are not codified in the annual edition. FAA publishes airworthiness directives in full in the Federal Register as amendments to §39.13.

NOTE: Additional material not in old version of regulation omitted.

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Plain language in NIH applications

Example 3: *BEFORE*

TITLE: RISK FACTORS AND PREVALENCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN TRUCK DRIVERS IN NIGERIA

DESCRIPTION: Usage of alcohol and other drugs of abuse is rapidly rising in Nigeria. Since 2000, self-reported use of alcohol has increased by 25%, the use of tobacco by 37%, and of heroin by 47%. These increases in substance use pose a significant threat to the public health and safety in this resource-limited nation, where programs and funding for healthcare services in general, but especially for the treatment of substance abuse and addiction, are largely unavailable or sporadically provided. The purpose of this international research project is to conduct a collaborative study to define both risk and protective factors for, and the prevalence of, alcohol, tobacco and heroin use in a nationally-representative sample of Nigerian truck drivers between the ages of 12-25 years old. This group has experienced the largest increase in the use of these three drugs for the past five years. We propose to employ both qualitative and quantitative research methods to determine the roles of social, behavioral, and environmental indicators on drug use. The specific objectives of this proposed research are: 1. To determine the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and heroin use and abuse among truck drivers. 2. To examine the associations between drug use behaviors and environmental and social factors and 3. To assess the behaviors and belief systems of drug users as related to the use individually or in tandem of these three drugs. Specific Aims 1 and 2 will be achieved by combining in-depth national surveys on drug use with hospital emergency room reported health data on truck drivers treated for alcohol, tobacco and heroin related disorders. These aims will provide information on the etiology of drug use among this population. Specific Aim 3 will be achieved by conducting in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group evaluations on a selected sub-sample at truck stops across Nigeria to discern further details of their alcohol, tobacco and heroin use behaviors, and on other aspects of their use including risk and protective factors. The long-term goal of this study is to determine behavioral, social, and environmental factors predictive of drug abuse to inform future interventions to reduce hazardous drug use.

PUBLIC HEALTH RELEVANCE: We propose to conduct a collaborative, mixed methods study on alcohol, tobacco and heroin abuse and addiction in Nigeria. This is a country where substance abuse has been increasing recently, and where limited resources and treatment programs exist for substance abuse and addiction. Both qualitative and quantitative survey methods truck drivers will be administered to gain insights on the prevalence and the risk and protective factors of alcohol, tobacco and heroin use. Such information is needed for future prevention and intervention efforts, and may be applicable to wider medical settings such as primary healthcare in other resource-poor communities throughout the world.

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Plain language in NIH applications

Example 3: *AFTER*

TITLE: DEVELOPING STRATEGIES TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE AT LOW TO MINIMAL COST

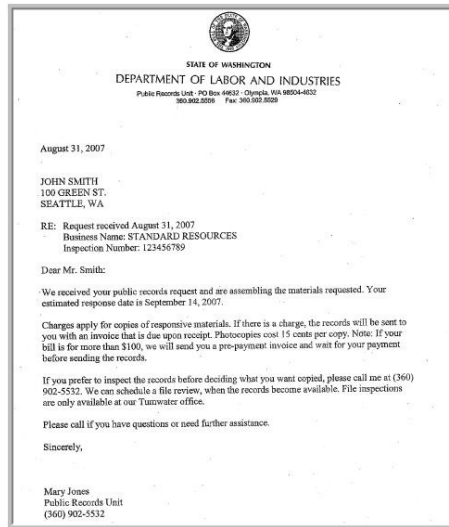
DESCRIPTION: The abuse of alcohol, tobacco and heroin has significant medical, behavioral and social consequences on individuals and society in the United States. In addition, healthcare costs for the treatment of substance abuse and addiction continue to rise. Therefore, methods need to be developed that decrease the incidence and prevalence of substance abuse while also controlling and reducing the costs of its treatment. Effective, low-cost treatment programs should speak to the motives that compel individuals to use drugs. The objective of the proposed research is to identify social, behavioral, and environmental factors that influence the use of alcohol, tobacco or heroin. These factors will be determined from surveying a study population, truck drivers in Nigeria, whose drug usage is rising. A unique aspect of the study sample is that these individuals also have limited access to resources for the treatment of substance addiction. Therefore, their drug use behaviors and beliefs may be useful in developing low cost approaches for the treatment of substance use disorders in other parts of the world, including the US. To complete its objectives, this research project will analyze data collected from national surveys and hospital emergency room health statistics to determine the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and heroin use, and to identify environmental and social factors that promote drug use. Additionally, this project will conduct in-depth qualitative interviews and focus group evaluations to correlate personal attitudes and beliefs with drug use. This project should identify risk and protective factors that can be incorporated in the future design of low-cost behavioral interventions to reduce drug use.

PUBLIC HEALTH RELEVANCE: Substance abuse and addiction places a significant burden on individuals, families and society in the United States. The healthcare costs for treating substance addiction can be staggering. This research will contribute to the development of clinically-effective methods for reducing substance use that are provided at low or minimal cost, which will be of medical and economic benefit to all.

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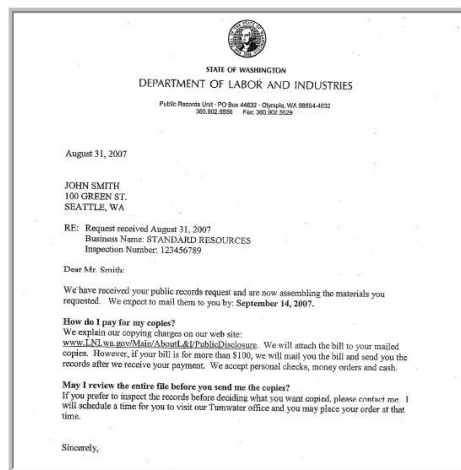
Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries' Confirmation Letter - Before



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Washington State Dept. of Labor and Industries' Confirmation Letter - After



We have received your public records request.

To make sure you receive a complete response, we will:

- Assign your request a "Request ID" tracking number.
- Contact you to clarify your request, if we need to. *(Be clear and specific. It may take extra time if we need to contact you for a clarification.)*
- Coordinate with other LMI offices to locate the records* and make copies.
- Review each record and remove confidential or exempt information, as required by law.
- Explain in writing our responses to the harmful you requested.
- Mail the records available to you, by:
 - Mailing them to the address you gave. *(There may be a charge. See our fees below.)*
 - Scheduling an appointment for you to review the records at our Turnwater office. *(At that time, you may personally review the materials and decide if you wish to purchase copies.)*

* Examples of records are: photographs, photos, audio tapes and DVDs.

Do you need information about:

- Types of LMI records that are confidential?
- Washington laws that may apply to your public records request?
- LMI records available on our website?
- Washington's Public Records Act?

Visit our web site!
www.Lni.wa.gov/Main/AboutLni/PublicDisclosure

Each year, Public Records staff responds to requests for more than half a million records!

Phone: 360-902-5535 Fax: 360-902-5529 E-mail: PublicRecords@lni.wa.gov
Main: Public Records Unit, Department of Labor & Industries, P.O. Box 46022, Olympia, WA 98504-4602

Public records rates at LMI			
Photocopy	\$0.15	Flippy disk	\$0.40
Photo request	\$0.20	Compact disk	\$0.12
Audio cassette	\$0.60	Microfilm	\$1.20
Video cassette	\$0.82	DVDs	\$0.50

If your order is \$100 or more, we will send you a letter with an invoice for payment. As soon as we receive your payment, we will mail you the records.

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Florida Dept. of Children and Families – Family Safety Letter: Before and After

Before	After
<p>January 3, 2007</p> <p>Ms. Laelia Rubescens 4000 SW 99th Street, # 128 Anytown, Florida 22344</p> <p>Dear Ms. Rubescens:</p> <p>Thank you for your recent letter to former Secretary Rubin regarding concerns to children in out-of-home care. Secretary Butterworth has asked me to respond to you on his behalf.</p> <p>Your summary of the problems facing children removed from their families shows your compassion and understanding. I appreciate your taking time to share thoughts and ideas for solutions to some tragic situations.</p> <p>I agree that child welfare partners must provide useful services with the resources available. Florida has designed its community-based care model based on thoughts of concerned citizens like you. We welcome suggestions for improvement, such as yours on the best use of resources, home visits, and quality. We will include these suggestions in planning if you want details of actions we take to assure quality, please feel free to write me directly.</p> <p>Thank you again for your interest in children's issues.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>[Director's Name] Office of Family Safety</p>	<p>January 3, 2007</p> <p>Ms. Laelia Rubescens 4000 SW 99th Street, # 128 Anytown, Florida 22344</p> <p>Dear Ms. Rubescens:</p> <p>Thank you for your letter about children in out-of-home care. Secretary Butterworth asked me to answer you on his behalf.</p> <p>Your summary of the problems facing children removed from their families shows your compassion and understanding. I appreciate your taking time to share thoughts and ideas for solutions to some tragic situations.</p> <p>I agree that child welfare partners must provide useful services with the resources available. Florida has designed its community-based care model based on thoughts of concerned citizens like you. We welcome suggestions for improvement, such as yours on the best use of resources, home visits, and quality. We will include these suggestions in planning if you want details of actions we take to assure quality, please feel free to write me directly.</p> <p>Thank you again for your interest in children's issues.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p>[Director's Name] Office of Family Safety</p>

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Florida Dept. of Children and Families – Family Safety Letter - After


 State of Florida
 Department of Children and Families

January 3, 2007
 Ms. Laelia Rubescens
 4000 SW 99th Street, # 128
 Anytown, Florida 22344

Dear Ms. Rubescens:

Thank you for your letter about children in out-of-home care. Secretary Butterworth asked me to answer you on his behalf.

Your summary of the problems facing children removed from their families shows your compassion and understanding. I appreciate your taking time to share thoughts and ideas for solutions to some tragic situations.

I agree that child welfare partners must provide useful services with the resources available. Florida has designed its community-based care model based on thoughts of concerned citizens like you. We welcome suggestions for improvement, such as yours on the best use of resources, home visits, and quality. We will include these suggestions in planning if you want details of actions we take to assure quality, please feel free to write me directly.

Thank you again for your interest in children's issues.

Sincerely,

[Director's Name]
 Office of Family Safety

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Handouts, Page 2

How is this content difficult for readers?

Plain Language in Practice: Writing for the Web

List three ways this web content is difficult for readers

(From the pre-2007 website of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Aflatoxin

Aflatoxin is a potent human carcinogen. It is a naturally occurring toxin produced by *Aspergillus flavus*, a mold found on food products such as corn, that acts as a potent liver carcinogen in rodents. More importantly, research supported by our institute has provided clear evidence that aflatoxin ingestion through contaminated foodstuffs is one of the major etiological factors in human hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) in China and sub-Saharan Africa. In certain regions of these countries, at least 250,000 deaths from HCC occur annually.

Work supported by NIEHS has led to significant advances in both the development, validation and application of aflatoxin-related biomarkers in molecular epidemiology studies of aflatoxin related HCC and the initiation of Phase II chemopreventive trials.

Important advances in aflatoxin research in humans have been realized by the development of sensitive analytical tools capable of measuring aflatoxin

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Handouts, Page 2

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Important advances in aflatoxin research in humans have been realized by the development of sensitive analytical tools capable of measuring aflatoxin metabolites and aflatoxin-DNA adducts in urine of exposed and unexposed persons (Wogan; P01E500597, Groopman; P01E506052). The use of these biomarkers was validated in a human molecular dosimetry study conducted over a 1-week period in the Peoples Republic of China. This study demonstrated a statistically significant relationship between intake of aflatoxin in the diet and excretion of aflatoxin-DNA adducts and aflatoxin metabolites (Groopman; P01E506052, P01E505622, P00E503819). Further molecular epidemiologic studies employing the use of case-control and nested case-control studies showed highly significant associations between the presence of urinary aflatoxin, serum hepatitis B surface antigen positivity (HBV) and HCC risk. The presence of the aflatoxin-DNA adducts with any metabolite was the best predictor of HCC risk.

Of particular importance was the finding that there was a synergistic interaction between being positive for aflatoxin adduct and HBV. The relative risk for developing HCC when both biomarkers were present is 59.4 compared to a relative risk of 3.4 for nucleic acid adduct alone or 7.9 for HBV alone (Groopman; P01E506052). A similar study carried out in Taiwan confirmed the China findings; that is, HCC risk was greatest for individuals who were positive for aflatoxin-adducts and HBV. In addition, the effect of genetic polymorphisms in carcinogen metabolizing genes important in aflatoxin metabolism was investigated. A statistically significant dose-response relationship between serum aflatoxin-albumin adduct level and HCC risk among subjects with null genotypes of GSTM1 and/or GSTT1 was observed. The greatest risk was seen when both GSTM1 and GSTT1 were absent (Santella; P01E503110). Investigators have also verified that a mutational hot spot at codon 249 on the tumor suppressor gene p53 was specifically linked to aflatoxin exposure in areas of the world where aflatoxin contamination of foodstuffs is endemic (Groopman). In addition, results from the Taiwan study

- Unfamiliar terms
 - No links to more info
 - No headings
 - No scannable features
 - Wordy phrasing
- (“Of particular importance was the finding that ...”)

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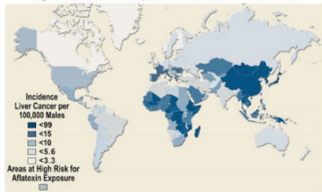
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Aflatoxin content in plain language

Aflatoxin & Liver Cancer

For almost four decades, NIEHS-funded scientists have conducted research on the role in promoting liver cancer of aflatoxin, a naturally occurring toxin produced by mold. Their discovery of the genetic changes that result from aflatoxin exposure have led to a better understanding of the link between aflatoxin and cancer risk in humans. These discoveries are also being used in developing cancer prevention strategies.

Correlation Between Populations with High Liver Cancer Rates and High Risk of Chronic Exposure to Aflatoxin Contamination



Liver cancer data from the GLOBOCAN 2002 database (http://www-ship.sarc.fr/GLOBOCAN_frame.htm)
Aflatoxin data from Williams et al., Human Aflatoxicosis in Developing Countries, Am J Clin Nutr 80:1105-22, 2004.

Aflatoxin exposure occurs primarily through the diet. Aflatoxins grow on whole grains such as corn, rice, and wheat, as well as on peanuts, almonds, walnuts, sunflower seeds, and spices such as black pepper and coriander. Aflatoxins can contaminate these food products during processing, storage, or transport when conditions are favorable for mold growth.

NIEHS-funded scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology were among the first to show that exposure to aflatoxin can lead to liver cancer. Their research also demonstrated that aflatoxin's cancer-causing potential is due to its ability to produce altered forms of DNA called adducts. Researchers now use the levels of these DNA adducts in blood and urine as sensitive biomarkers of aflatoxin exposure in humans.

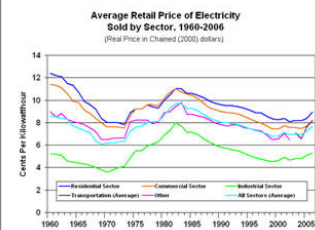
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Handouts, Page 3 Draft content for Energy in Brief

How is my electricity priced?

A major component of the price of your electricity is the cost and availability of the fuel used for power generation and the transmission system necessary to deliver the power to you, as well as construction costs of plants and the associated expenses for operation and maintenance. Supply and demand for fuel and transmission, international events, and weather conditions also affect the price of your electricity and cause it to fluctuate.



Source: Energy Information Administration, *Annual Energy Review 2006* DOE/EIA-1354(2006) (Washington, D.C., June 2007), Table 8.10.
A look at the past 35 years shows significant fluctuations due to the oil shocks of the 1970s and the move towards greater conservation in the 1980s.

In most areas, the cost to generate electricity can fluctuate monthly and even daily due to changes in demand. Daily demand is usually highest in the afternoon and early evening (on-peak). Seasonal peaks reflect regional weather and climatic conditions, with a majority of the United States experiencing the highest peak demand during the summer months when air-conditioning use is greatest. Thus, there can be significant differences between what a residential consumer pays for electricity in each State. This is chiefly caused by fuel availability and climate.

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Handouts, Page 4

Plain language in the published EIB:

Many Factors Affect the Price You Pay for Electricity

Factors that affect the price of electricity include:

- Cost and availability of the resources used for power generation (e.g., water is relatively inexpensive while natural gas tends to be more costly)
- Construction and maintenance costs of powerplants
- Cost of maintaining and using the transmission system to deliver electricity
- Supply and demand for input fuels and for transmission lines
- Weather conditions (e.g., storms, extreme heat)
- Regulations. For example, in some States prices are fully regulated by Public Service Commissions, while in others there is a combination of unregulated prices (for generators) and regulated prices (for transmission and distribution)

In most parts of the United States, supply and demand cause monthly and even daily price fluctuations. Demand is usually highest:

- In the afternoon and early evening (these are "on-peak" hours)
- During the summer months when air-conditioning use is greatest

Climate can also affect supply, particularly for ~~renewables~~ such as hydropower, wind, and solar.

However, residential consumers in many areas pay rates based on the monthly average price of electricity so they do not experience these price fluctuations.

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Questions?

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

The Act:

- Requires federal agencies to use clear communication that the public can understand.
- Includes documents that:
 - Are needed to get federal benefits or services or for filing taxes
 - Provide information about benefits or services
 - Explain how to comply with requirements administered or enforced by the federal government

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

What does my agency need to do?

- Create a plain writing section of its website.
- Follow OMB–issued guidance.
- Create plain writing guidance.
 - Agencies may follow the [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#).
- Train agency employees on plain language
- Create and submit an implementation plan
- Create and post annual compliance plans online
- Use Plain Language in public facing documents

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

2011 Key Dates

- By 4/13, OMB must issue final guidance
- By 7/13, agencies must
 - Designate a senior official for “plain writing”
 - Submit implementation plan to OMB
 - Create plain writing web page
- By 10/13, agencies must:
 - Use plain language in any new or substantially revised document
 - Write annual compliance reports and post these reports on its plain language web page

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

Your Action Items:

- Take a Plain Language course (PlainLanguage.gov and WMU offer training)
- Post a Plain Writing Act page for your agency off your Open Gov page (http://www.plainlanguage.gov/plLaw/law/agency_pl_page.cfm)
- Apply OMB-approved [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](http://FederalPlainLanguageGuidelines) to documents and web pages
- Work on the most key content first

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Plain Writing Act of 2010

References:

PLAIN's Plain Writing Act of 2010: Federal Agency Requirements page
<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/plLaw/law/index.cfm>

OMB Preliminary Guidance

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/2011/m11-05.pdf>

Web Manager University

<http://www.howto.gov/web-content>

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Regulations

The Act does not cover regulations

- 3 separate Executive Orders emphasize the need for plain language.
 - E.O. 13563 Improving Regulation and Regulatory Review
 - E.O. 12866 Regulatory planning and review
 - E.O. 12988 Civil Justice Reform

Agencies with PL Programs

- GSA WMU classes
- NIH has an online plain language course open to the public
- FAA Plain Language program
- USCIS Plain Language program
- SEC Plain English Initiative
- OFR has how to write regulations in plain language online

Questions?

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Webinar overview

- Part 1: The principles of plain language
- Part 2: How to edit content according to plain language principles
- Part 3: How the Plain Writing Act could affect your agency's operations
- **Part 4: Where to find additional plain language training and resources**

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Plain Language Training

- Plainlanguage.gov lists free online training
http://www.plainlanguage.gov/resources/take_training/index.cfm
- Webcontent.gov's plain language page lists training resources
http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/managing_content/writing_and_editing.shtml
- Web Manager University's class schedule lists its plain language courses
<http://www.usa.gov/webcontent/wmu/schedule/>
- WMU is developing an online course in plain language, expected to be available this summer. Contact Nicole Burton: nicole.burton@gsa.gov

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Plain Language Resources

- **Center for Plain Language**
<http://centerforplainlanguage.org/>
- **Easy-to-Read NYC: Guidelines for Clear and Effective Communication**
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/adulted/downloads/pdf/easy-to-read-nyc.pdf>
- **Federal Plain Language Guidelines**
<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/howto/guidelines/reader-friendly.cfm>
- **Florida Department of Children and Families: Before-and-After Examples**
http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/initiatives/plainlanguage/pl_examples.shtml
- **National Archives – Plain Language Tools**
<http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/write/plain-language/>
- **PlainLanguage.gov**
<http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>
- **Toolkit for Making Written Material Clear and Effective (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services)**
<http://www.cms.gov/WrittenMaterialsToolkit/>

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Plain language Organizations

- [Plain Language Action and Information Network \(PLAIN\)](#)
- [Center for Plain Language](#)
- [Plain Language Association International](#)
- [Usability.gov](#)
- [Clarity - international association promoting plain legal language](#)

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Plain Language Guidelines

- [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#)
- [Easy-to-Read NYC](#)
- [Plain Language - Making HIPAA Privacy Notices More Readable – Health Resources and Services Administration](#)
- [Guidelines from NIH's Plain Language Initiative](#)
- [FAA's videos on plain language](#)
- [Governor's Plain Language Handbook](#) (Florida)
- [Making Regulations Readable](#) (Federal Register)
- [Plain English Handbook](#) (SEC)
- [FAA Writing Standards](#)
- [Plain Language Guidelines](#) Oklahoma Department of Human Services
- [Writing to Customers in Plain Talk](#) (Washington State)

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