

U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission

Report on Implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010

July 13, 2011 (updated April 13, 2016)

The purpose of this Report is to describe the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's plans for implementing the Plain Writing Act of 2010 (Act). The Act is intended to make it easy for the public to understand government documents. The SEC, like other federal agencies, must write documents in plain writing, which the Act defines as writing that is "clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field and intended audience." Plain writing avoids jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity.

By October 13, 2011, the Act requires executive agencies to write *new or substantially revised* "covered documents" using the Federal Plain Language Guidelines. The Act defines a "covered document" as any document that

- is necessary for obtaining any Federal Government benefit or service or filing taxes;
- provides information about any Federal Government benefit or service; or
- explains to the public how to comply with a requirement the Federal Government administers or enforces.

The Act excludes "a regulation" from the definition of "covered document," although [guidance from the Office of Management and Budget](#) (OMB) states that rulemaking "preambles," which correspond to our rulemaking releases, are to be considered "covered documents."

Based on the OMB guidance and input from the SEC's offices and divisions, "covered documents" generally include, but are not limited to:

- narrative text of Commission releases (for example, proposing, adopting, concept);
- no-action letters, exemptive and interpretive orders, including SRO rule filing notices and orders, answers to frequently asked questions, compliance alerts, and comment letters;
- press releases, news digests, and most content of sec.gov and investor.gov;
- investor alerts and bulletins; and
- correspondence and published speeches, presentations and conference materials that explain how to comply with SEC rules.

Other Requirements of the Act

- **Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing**

The Senior Agency Official responsible for Plain Writing is Lori J. Schock, Director, Office of Investor Education and Advocacy.

- **Plain Writing Webpage**

We have created a webpage that informs the public of the SEC's plans for complying with the Act and allows the agency to receive and respond to public comments and suggestions. The webpage, <http://www.sec.gov/plainwriting.shtml>, is accessible through a link at the bottom of the SEC homepage and on investor.gov.

- **Informing Agency Staff of Requirements of the Act**

We sent an agency-wide Administrative Notice to SEC staff, informing them of the requirements of the Act, on July 11, 2011.

- **Training**

From April 1, 2015 through March 30, 2016, over 180 SEC staff completed professional writing courses that included a "plain language" component. Online training resources from PLAIN and other federal agencies will also be made available to the staff.

- **Assessment of Plain Writing Efforts**

Plain Writing Liaisons in the SEC's offices and divisions will report on progress on plain writing to the Senior Agency Official for Plain Writing. The Liaisons will also help evaluate public comments, consider the need for additional staff training, and develop methods to encourage staff compliance with the Act, which might include an award for achievement in plain writing.

- **Request for Comment**

Members of the public are requested to submit comments and suggestions on the SEC's plain writing efforts to: PlainWriting@sec.gov.