



U.S. Railroad Retirement Board Plain Writing Act of 2010 Annual Compliance Report May 2025

Background

The Plain Writing Act, enacted in October 2010, requires agencies to communicate in a manner “that the public can understand and use” and applies to any application, form, informational material, letter, or notice. It also defines plain writing as “clear, concise, well-organized, and follows other best practices appropriate to the subject or field or intended audience.”

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board (RRB) strives to communicate with its customers and stakeholders in a clear, understandable manner. As part of this effort, we have incorporated the intent and requirements of the Plain Writing Act, with the ultimate goal of improving our ability to clearly communicate information to our stakeholders about our various programs and how to access them.

Implementation

The RRB has a page on its website – **RRB.gov** – dedicated to plain language, as required by the law, which is accessible by going to [RRB.gov/PlainWriting](https://www.RRB.gov/PlainWriting). The page includes information on guidelines and best practices in this area, as well as an email address should a visitor to the page have any questions or concerns about agency documents. The agency also posts its most recent annual compliance reports on this page, with the RRB’s Public Affairs unit overseeing these activities.

Current Activities

The RRB has a Learning Management System (LMS) that includes an online training platform known as *RRB University*. The LMS helps the RRB manage and plan training activities. It includes a specific online course on the tenets of the Plain Writing Act, along with several other online courses on improving clarity and content of written communication. The intent behind the RRB’s training mirrors the goals set forth in the most recent federal report card, issued by the Center for Plain Language in January 2024, which focused on ease of understanding information provided on agency websites and ease of accessing online services.

Most agency employees have completed the online training on the Plain Writing Act, with recent course participants either being new employees or individuals taking an updated course as refresher training. Many employees completed updated refresher training over the past two years. The number of employees who took the Plain Writing Act training in the past year was 16, compared to 118 the previous year, and 80% of these employees were at headquarters. Reduced hiring and staffing levels limited the demand and need for the Plain Writing Act training and other related courses.

Several other online classes related to plain writing and effective communication are also offered through *RRB University*. In the past year, 23 employees completed “Clarity and Conciseness in Business Writing” and “Avoiding Common Writing Mistakes,” and 21 employees completed two courses related to writing concisely, “Keeping it Short and to the Point” and “Using the Right Verbs and Voice.” In addition, 15 employees completed “Creating Well Constructed Sentences,” “Audience and Purpose in Business Writing,” and “Writing to Inform: Organizing Your Ideas.”

A core group of 22 employees, most of whom are involved in writing policy and procedure, took several online courses that will benefit units throughout the agency in terms of communicating with the public and processing claims in an accurate, efficient manner. These courses included “Improving Your Technical Writing Skills,” “Organizing Content: Giving Purpose to Your Writing,” “Training by Writing,” “Writing Clear Instructions,” and “Writing Great Reference Materials.”

Questions or requests for additional information can be directed to Acting Director of Public Affairs Elizabeth Mocek as follows.

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