Establishing Plain Talk at Ecology

**Purpose:** To require the use of Plain Talk principles in Ecology’s internal and external written communications.

**Application:** This policy applies to all Ecology employees.

### 1. Employees Write Clear Documents the Intended Audience Can Easily Understand.

Documents include:

- Letters
- Instructions and applications
- Focus sheets
- Fact sheets
- Public notices
- Reports
- Web pages
- Presentations
- Permits
- Any other written/printed proof of agency action or expectation

### 2. Employees Use Plain Talk Principles to Write Documents.

Employees use the Plain Talk principles below:

- Use clear language commonly used and understood by the intended audience.
- Include only the information the recipient needs and present it in a logical sequence.
- Use short sentences.
- Write sentences in the active voice.
- Use a layout and design to help the reader understand the message on the first try.
  This includes:
  - Adequate white space
  - Bulleted lists
  - Visual aids such as tables
  - Helpful headings
  - Other proven techniques
3. The Director Appoints the Plain Talk Coordinator.

The Director, with input from the Senior Management Team, appoints a Plain Talk Coordinator. The Coordinator oversees the agency’s efforts to implement the Plain Talk Executive Order, 05-03.

4. Each Program Has a Plain Talk Team.

All agency programs recruit or appoint employees to a Program Plain Talk Team. Each program team helps develop and implement the process for how to incorporate Plain Talk into their program.

5. Plain Talk is Incorporated into the Work Done at Ecology.

Each program will decide where to focus their Plain Talk efforts based on their existing program priorities.

Ecology program managers and supervisors are responsible for making sure employees:

- Use the Plain Talk principles in all new documents.
- Review existing documents against the Plain Talk principles.
- Rewrite existing documents that don’t meet the Plain Talk principles.
- Learn how to write clear documents the intended audience can understand by taking training offered by the Plain Talk Team or Department of Personnel.

6. Documents are User-tested.

User-testing is a way to evaluate if a target audience can understand a document. Programs are encouraged to incorporate user-testing into their process. The Plain Talk Coordinator user-tests documents, at an agency level, when appropriate.

Approved:

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Director

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