

Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles



The Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles finalized its Plain Language Plan in March 2007. The plan includes a review of all written communications and a guideline and process for the review. By the end of 2007, 128 employees completed training to identify common elements of plain language communication. After inventory and prioritizing documents, the trained employees reviewed 1,974 agency documents and made plain language edits as necessary. The Department currently reviews publications, reports, our Internet and intranet websites, and external and internal correspondence to ensure we employ plain language principles when we communicate with customers, business partners, stakeholders, the public and with each other.

TRAINING

In 2008, 152 employees completed courses that covered plain language. The Department now incorporates plain language training into three instructor-led employee classes.

*Super*Vision*, a requirement for all new supervisors, includes instruction on active voice, passive voice, a Plain Language Checklist, and the use of Microsoft Word to check for plain language. The class teaches supervisors to write in plain language and to encourage their subordinates to use it in communications with customers.

- Number of employees who completed Super*Vision in 2009 = 81

Powerful State Applications helps employees write effective applications and resumes. The class includes instruction and activities about active and passive voice, as well as using common language throughout the application process.

- Number of employees who completed Powerful State Applications in 2009 = 6

Effective Phone Techniques teaches customer service representatives how to communicate clearly with callers. The training includes information about avoiding the use of acronyms, jargon and technical terms and encourages employees to check for understanding before ending the call.

- Number of employees who completed Effective Phone Techniques in 2009 = 26

TIPS FOR EMPLOYEES

The Department uses existing communication channels to convey plain language reminders to employees. One example is through the Department's monthly newsletter, *HSMV Hi-Lights*, which the Communications Office e-mails to all employees and to numerous stakeholders. The publication includes employee and agency news of interest, and the Department uses the newsletter as a way to provide employees with plain language tips, such as writing in active versus passive voice and using personal pronouns to enhance your readers' understanding and relevance to them.

PLAIN LANGUAGE FOR INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Department recognizes that communicating in plain language takes continuous effort and attention. The Communications Office reviews agency publications, reports, speeches and talking points, and website content to make sure that we present the information in a way that readers will find easy to understand and navigate. In 2009, DHSMV dedicated a [webpage](#) solely for customers who seek information related to open government and public records requests. The webpage contains the names of agency representatives who can provide assistance in their particular areas of operation.

The Department applies plain language principles and the [Associated Press Stylebook](#) standards to news releases, publications and the agency's website, which often includes reviewing readability statistics using Microsoft Office and editing the document so that it incorporates active prose. Some of the agency's key means of communicating both internally and externally include:

- www.flhsmv.gov: The Department's public website is an integral medium to provide detailed information to the public and our stakeholders.
- www.GatherGoGet.com: The Department's website for the Gather. Go. Get. campaign informs Florida drivers and identification card holders of the state's new driver license and ID card requirements.
- www.TakeTheWheel.net: The Department's website for teens by teens.
- **DHSMV SafetyNet**: The Department's intranet is an integral medium to provide detailed information to employees. Recent updates allow employees to share files and edit documents on the site.
- **HSMV Hi-Lights**: A monthly newsletter e-mailed to DHSMV's more than 4,000 employees and to stakeholders, such as the DHSMV Advisory Board and Florida Highway Patrol Advisory Council members.
- **Expressways**: A newsletter e-mailed to stakeholders and employees semi-annually and posted on the Department's public website.
- **Monthly Accomplishments**: A report e-mailed to the Governor's Office at the end of each month.
- **Bi-Weekly Report**: A report e-mailed to the Florida Cabinet members every two weeks.
- **On the Radar**: A weekly e-mail and companion calendar designed to communicate with employees in the Department's headquarters building in Tallahassee.
- **Press Releases**: Agency press releases go through a review process that includes executive level review. To arm employees who wish to contribute to the agency's publicity efforts, the Department provides a downloadable news release template with instructions on our intranet site to assist employees who wish to submit press release ideas to the Communications Office for consideration.

- **Collateral Educational and Informational Materials:** The Department tailors materials, such as brochures, posters and flyers, specifically for the target audience message we want to convey.

The Department continues to use regular publications, training and our website as tools to educate and reiterate plain language skills and tools and to communicate effectively with Florida's motoring public.