Appendix G
Plain Language Checklist
Writing for People who are Deaf

Writing concisely and precisely will enable you to communicate effectively with people who are deaf

Plain language ensures that your audience can understand not only the technical terms and concepts but also the directions and descriptions you provide. Writing in a concise form with an emphasis on the most important information will help your audience understand your meaning and engage more fully in the concepts.

Visit http://www.plainlanguage.gov for more tips and resources on writing in a plain language style.

Lead with your main point(s) in the beginning of your message.

Use active voice verbs. If the sentence uses is/am/were _____ by the _____, then you've probably got a passive construction. Pull out the main concept/character and action. Then rewrite.

> *Bad*: The smoke alarm **was included** in the installation **by** the firefighter.
> *Good*: The firefighter installed a smoke alarm.

Use positive methods when describing what actions people should take. Negative forms of expression may confuse people during an emergency situation.

> *Bad*: **Do not put** a hot pan directly on the table.
> *Good*: Set the hot pan on a heat resistance surface.

Introduce key details to clarify, but limit the jargon.

> *Bad*: The detector has **dual photoelectric and ionization smoke sensing technology and electrodes** so that it alerts the residents through a better **early warning system**.
> *Good*: The smoke alarm has sensors to detect both smoldering fires and flaming fires, so people are alerted earlier, giving them more time to escape.

Avoid hyping the information with too many adjectives or stylistic embellishments.

> *Bad*: During a fire, the **deadly** heat and **toxic** smoke will rise and **mercilessly engulf** your **defenseless** body, making escape **impossible**.
> *Good*: During a fire, rising smoke and heat make escape difficult.

Avoid using colloquial and idiomatic expressions. They add more concepts or noise instead of explaining the main concepts.

> *Bad*: When it comes to fire safety, you cannot **pass the buck**; everyone must protect themselves.
> *Good*: When it comes to fire safety, you must be responsible for your own safety.

Remove as many words as possible while ensuring your meaning is clear. Fewer words to read leads to faster, more interested reading.

> *Bad*: A good home escape plan is **absolutely essential** in planning your response to a **sudden and unexpected** home fire.
> *Good*: A home escape plan will help you respond to a fire.