



THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20201

SEP 26 2002

Annetta L. Cheek, Ph.D.
Plain Language Coordinator
Federal Aviation Administration
Office of the Administrator
800 Independence Avenue, SW, Suite 1010
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Dr. Cheek:

As we strive to address the unprecedented challenges facing the Federal Government in its obligation to keep America safe, secure, and healthy, communicating clearly with each other and the public is more important than ever. Clarity is essential in communicating the often complex and critical information that the public needs. No matter how sound our decisions or how accurate our information, if the public cannot understand us, we have failed.

I applaud and congratulate the *Plain Language Action and Information Network* (PLAIN). As a volunteer group made up of representatives from a number of Federal entities, PLAIN has been instrumental in successfully promoting the use of plain language in Government writing for many years. And the group's sustained commitment to clear communication of Government information has never been more critical.

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides a wealth of information on topics ranging from scientific research on diseases, to directions on obtaining Federal funds, to guidance in dealing with emergencies and health threats. I am proud of the work that HHS agencies have done to communicate information clearly and to the point. The contributions that the Food and Drug Administration and the National Institutes of Health have made in their own plain language initiatives and their support of PLAIN activities exemplify this Department's efforts.

I have made a personal commitment to this cause. The work your organization has done to stimulate the various Departments and Agencies of the Federal Government to use plain language, especially in documents intended for the public, is so important. This is not a simple challenge—clear writing is hard work. People need to acquire new skills and abandon writing habits ingrained over years. But the payoff is great—by communicating effectively the first time, we can more cost-effectively and efficiently serve our citizens. And by presenting crucial information and services to the public in an understandable way, we will help ensure a safe and healthy America.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tommy G. Thompson".

Tommy G. Thompson