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**Web Site Management: Standard EPA Look and Feel**

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**Purpose:** This policy establishes the requirement for standardizing the layout of EPA's public access Web pages with a consistent look and feel, to establish an EPA brand, and to ensure that visitors know when they are on an EPA page.

**Audience:** Assistant Administrators, Inspector General, Chief Financial Officer, Deputy Chief of Staff (Office of the Administrator), Regional Administrators, Office Directors and Regional equivalents, Web managers, Web developers and staff who manage/produce EPA Web pages.

**Background:** EPA senior management recognizes that the Web has overtaken paper-based products as the key element in the Agency's distribution of information. Since its launch in 1994, the number of pages on EPA's public access Web site has grown tremendously.

Design standards for EPA pages have been implemented in the past, but wide variations existed in their application. As the number of pages and levels on the site grows, using one consistent design across all pages has become very important for customer acceptance and ease of use.

With significant input from the entire Agency over the fall of 2001, the Offices of Environmental Information (OEI) and Public Affairs (OPA) jointly developed a new specification for all EPA Web pages. On January 11, 2002, Administrator Whitman issued a memo directing EPA to convert the Web site to meet this specification (<http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/webmemo.htm>). This policy formalizes and explains that requirement, and gives further direction.

**Policy:** The content of EPA public access Web pages is provided by program and regional offices. To clearly identify every page on EPA's public access Web site as belonging to EPA, and to ensure that each page has required navigational and other design elements, pages on the EPA public access

Web site (<http://www.epa.gov>) must meet a standard specification (<http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/>).

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### Exemptions

The following types of pages are exempt from this requirement. A detailed description of exempted pages is in the Webguide. Follow the instructions in the specification (<http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/specification/index.htm#exemptions>).

A. Pages using the Adobe Portable Document format (with the suffix .pdf).

B. Documents using other proprietary formats (e.g., Word, Excel) (The EPA standard formats for publishing information on the Web are HTML and PDF. Proprietary formats (wpd, doc, xls, ppt) should be used only when absolutely necessary as, for example, when providing forms for customers to complete and submit or for spreadsheets that they will use.)

C. Joint sites. These are Web sites jointly sponsored by EPA and an outside organization such as a consortium, interstate or international commission, state, other Federal entity, local government, or private organization, that is collaborating with an EPA program office, laboratory or region through a formal agreement or mechanism.

~~~~~ D. Outdated information labeled in accordance with current policy.

E. Pages intended for children up to 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

~~~~~ F. Pop-up Windows (which should be avoided).

~~~~~ G. Password-protected areas (serving a limited audience).

H. Wide pages (that cannot be configured otherwise). These pages may use a special template, but must meet other requirements of the standard specification.

I. Presentations/briefings.

J. Pages that provide additional accessibility.

K. Redirection pages.

## L. Test directories.

Exemptions must be registered to assist in the measurement of compliance with this Order. Some exemptions are registered automatically while others require filling out a form. Anyone may fill out the form; Office Director (or regional equivalent) approval is not necessary.

Waivers

Offices may request a waiver to the specification for a particular page or series of pages. Reasons for waivers may include that application of the template causes a reduction of specific functionality or a reduced quality of customer service, but evidence must be provided supporting such claims.

Pages meeting the exemption criteria do not need a waiver but they must be registered per the directions above.

To request a waiver:

A. Prepare an email message or memorandum from the Office Director (or regional equivalent) responsible for the pages. Provide the reasons for the waiver request, the URL for the non-compliant page(s), if available, and a point of contact.

(2) Send the request to:  
Associate Administrator  
Office of Public Affairs (OPA), mailcode 1702A

OPA and OEI will jointly evaluate waiver requests and make a decision within 10 working days. If no decision is made by then, the relevant materials may be posted to the Web site, but the delay does not permanently excuse the materials from meeting the specification. If the waiver is later rejected, OPA will work with the requesting office to create a schedule for changing the materials to meet the standard look and feel.

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**Roles and Responsibilities:**

A. The Offices of Environmental Information and Public Affairs are jointly responsible for:

(1) developing and updating specifications for standard EPA Web pages (including templates, exemption criteria, etc.), in consultation with other program offices and regional offices,

(2) monitoring compliance with this policy through periodic audits and reviews of program office and regional office Web pages and,

(3) evaluating requests for waivers from the specification.

B. Assistant Administrators, General Counsel, Inspector General, Deputy Chief of Staff (Office of the Administrator) Regional Administrators, and the Chief Financial Officer are responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy.

C. Office Directors and Regional managers reporting to Regional Administrators are responsible for ensuring that everyone developing materials for their Web areas (Webmasters, Web managers, contractors, etc.) are knowledgeable about the look and feel requirements and that they comply with them. Also, these managers must originate requests for waivers from the requirements.

Authorities:

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A. Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, 44 USC 3506 (formerly the Information Technology Management Reform Act).

B. Memorandum from the Administrator, "Improving EPA's Web Site," January 11, 2002 (<http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/webmemo.htm>).

C. OEI functional statements contained in Agency Manual 1100, Organization and Functions (<http://epawww.epa.gov/rmpolicy/ads/dm/OEI-Cur.PDF>). OEI is responsible for developing and overseeing policies for proper posting, maintaining and periodic updating of data on Agency Web sites, and for maintaining a centralized Information Service Center that includes .... website geared to the general public.

Related Documents:

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Webguide - The look and feel specification, including templates, exemption criteria, and other guidance, is available in the Webguide at <http://www.epa.gov/epafiles/>.

Memorandum of Understanding between the Offices of Public Affairs and Environmental Information, "Management and Oversight Responsibilities for EPA's Web Site," November 8, 2002 (<http://intranet.epa.gov/productreview/pdfs/opaoeimou.htm>)

Recertification  
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Three years from date issued.

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Additional  
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For further information about this Order, please contact Web Team, Office of Public Affairs, 202-564-9727, or the Internet Team Leader, Office of Environmental Information, 513-569-7183.