

THE COAST GUARD CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL



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COMMANDANT INSTRUCTION M5216.4D

Subj: THE COAST GUARD CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

- Ref: (a) The Plain Writing Act of 2010, Pub.L. 111-274, 124 Stat. 2861, codified in 5 U.S.C.A. § 301 note.
 (b) The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub.L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355, as amended through P.L. 114-95, codified at 29 U.S.C.A. § 794d.
 (c) The Communications Act of 1934, Pub.L. 73-416, 48 Stat. 1064, codified at 47 U.S.C. § 151 et seq.
 (d) Federal Records Act of 1950 (as amended), Pub.L. 81-754, 64 Stat. 578, codified as 44 U.S.C. § 2101 et seq.

- PURPOSE. This Manual provides Coast Guard policy for electronic and paper correspondence, writing standards, and other correspondence related topics. This Manual contains guidance on how to access the latest templates, forms, and writing style guides.
- ACTION. All Coast Guard unit commanders, commanding officers, officers-in-charge, deputy/assistant commandants, and chiefs of headquarters staff elements must comply with the provisions of this Manual. Internet release is authorized.
- DIRECTIVES AFFECTED. The Coast Guard Correspondence Manual, COMDTINST M5216.4C is hereby cancelled.
- DISCLAIMER. This guidance is not a substitute for applicable legal requirements, nor is it itself a rule. It is intended to provide administrative guidance for Coast Guard personnel and is not intended to nor does it impose legally-binding requirements on any party outside the Coast Guard.

DISTRIBUTION - SDL No. 170

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NON-STANDARD DISTRIBUTION:

5. MAJOR CHANGES. This Manual is shorter than the prior version. Emphasis is on efficiency and the use of plain language. The Coast Guard writer should understand how to quickly create appropriate correspondence and know where to turn if further clarification is needed for specialized correspondence. Changes to include content addressing technological considerations in correspondence including electronic applications, electronic signature, and related accessibility requirements.
6. SCOPE AND AUTHORITIES. It is recommended the reader become familiar with the directives and publications that are noted throughout this Manual and are listed in numerical series order: Administrative Remarks, Form CG-3307, COMDTINST 1000.14 (series); Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25 (series); Coast Guard Civilian Awards Manual, COMDTINST M12451.1 (series); U.S. Coast Guard Postal Manual, COMDTINST M5110.1 (series); Information Management and Electronic Government (E-GOV), COMDTINST 5200.1 (series); Electronic Signatures and Management of Electronically Signed Records, COMDTINST 5200.5 (series); Forms Management and Automation, COMDTINST 5213.9 (series); The Coast Guard Directives System, COMDTINST M5215.6 (series); Writing in Plain Language to Increase Effectiveness, COMDTINST 5216.6 (series); Memorandum of Understanding/Agreement, COMDTINST 5216.18 (series); The Coast Guard Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts Manual, COMDTINST M5260.3 (series); Coast Guard Organizational Manual, COMDTINST M5400.7 (series); U.S. Coast Guard Cybersecurity Manual, COMDTINST M5500.13 (series) (FOUO); United States Coast Guard Printing and Binding Regulations, COMDTINST M5600.6 (series); Printed Matter for Official Ceremonies and Approved Stationery for use by Flag Officers of the U.S. Coast Guard, COMDTINST 5603.1A (series); Directives, Publications, and Reports Index, COMDTNOTE 5600 (series); and Standard Distribution List, COMDTNOTE 5605.
7. ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECT AND IMPACT CONSIDERATIONS.
 - a. The development of this Manual and the general policies contained within it have been thoroughly reviewed by the originating office in conjunction with the Office of Environmental Management, Commandant (CG-47). This Manual is categorically excluded under current Department of Homeland Security (DHS) categorical exclusion DHS (CATEX) A3 from further environmental analysis in accordance with the U.S. Coast Guard Environmental Planning Policy, COMDTINST 5090.1 and the Environmental Planning (EP) Implementing Procedures (IP).
 - b. This Manual will not have any of the following: significant cumulative impacts on the human environment; substantial controversy or substantial change to existing environmental conditions; or inconsistencies with any Federal, State, or local laws or administrative determinations relating to the environment. All future specific actions resulting from the general policy in this Manual must be individually evaluated for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Environmental Effects Abroad of Major Federal Actions, Executive Order 12114, Department of Homeland Security (DHS) NEPA policy, Coast Guard Environmental Planning policy, and compliance with all other applicable environmental mandates.

8. DISTRIBUTION. No paper distribution will be made of this Manual. An electronic version will be located on the following Commandant (CG-612) websites:
Internet: www.dcms.uscg.mil/directives and
CGPortal: cg.portal.uscg.mil/library/directives/SitePages/Home.aspx .
9. RECORDS MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS. This Manual has been thoroughly reviewed during the directives clearance process, and it has been determined there are no further records scheduling requirements, in accordance with Federal Records Act of 1950 (as amended), Pub.L. 81-754, 64 Stat. 578, codified at 44 U.S.C. § 2101 et seq., National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) requirements, and the Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). This policy does not have any significant or substantial change to existing records management requirements.
10. FORMS/REPORTS. The forms referenced in this Manual are available on the Coast Guard Standard Workstation or on the Internet: www.dcms.uscg.mil/Our-Organization/Assistant-Commandant-for-C4IT-CG-6/The-Office-of-Information-Management-CG-61/Forms-Management/ .
11. REQUEST FOR CHANGES. Units and individuals may formally recommend changes through the chain of command using the Coast Guard memorandum. Comments and suggestions from users of this Manual are welcomed. All such correspondence may be emailed to Commandant (CG-612) at: HQS-SMB-Directives@uscg.mil.

/DAVID M. DERMANELIAN/
Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
ASSISTANT COMMANDANT FOR C4IT (CG-6)

RECORD OF CHANGES

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INTRODUCTION TO THE COAST GUARD CORRESPONDENCE MANUAL

Correspondence is written communication exchanged for the purpose of communications both internally and externally to the Coast Guard. Correspondence refers to letters, memoranda, messages, email, forms, directives, issue papers, and other internal and external publications. Advances in technology will influence how the Coast Guard corresponds. The Coast Guard writer must remain agile to this changing environment.

The Coast Guard relies on clear, consistent, and responsive communications to carry out vital missions as well as provide transparency to Congress and to the public. All correspondence should be concise, accessible, and not detract from the professional image of the Coast Guard. The most common correspondence examples are presented in this Manual. The Coast Guard writer is encouraged to cross reference with authoritative directives and government style guides for specialized correspondence needs. The objective of correspondence management is to provide uniform standards in the preparation and dissemination of correspondence. The result should be a product that demonstrates both effective written communication and compliance with the policies contained in this Manual. Along with Federal requirements to improve the quality, tone, clarity, and responsiveness, all correspondence, information, communications, and technology based correspondence must be accessible to those with disabilities.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) style standard, unless noted, is to use the Government Publishing Office (GPO) Style Manual as a reference for internal and external correspondence and other written materials. DHS requests that all components refer to their DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook (series) to serve as a principal guide for the preparation and dissemination of written communications, both internal and external, and to ensure that DHS is in compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010, as codified, per Reference (a) and Section 508 accessibility as per the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, per Reference (b), and the Communications Act of 1934, as codified, as per Reference (c).

As missions, technology solutions, and laws evolve, the Coast Guard's communications procedures will evolve within DHS and also within the operational domain of the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and its Department of Defense Information Network (DoDIN), where most electronic correspondence is generated and transmitted. Correspondence routing may be complex, and a chain of command may impose communication preferences for a diversity of mission and mission support areas. Good judgment of the writer should be demonstrated in these circumstances.

CHAPTER 1. CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

A. Standards

1. Tone. The Coast Guard's image and effectiveness may be impaired if correspondence is difficult to understand, disrespectful, or impersonal. DHS emphasizes a unity of effort, and to never apologize for doing your job.
2. Responsiveness. Always include a point of contact, return telephone number, and email address when your correspondence is likely to prompt a reply or inquiry. Respond to every question in incoming letters, and address any untruths, misstatements, or inflammatory comments.
3. Accuracy. It is vital that responses contain the most up to date and accurate information. If metrics are included, they must be verifiable with a point of contact and date of origination. All content should be free of typographical errors and formatted correctly.
4. Spelling and Corrections. Webster's Third New International Dictionary provides correct spelling not otherwise appearing as standard preference in the GPO Style Manual. In some circumstances, spelling may also be required to vary from standard American English to British English (i.e. United Nations and other specialized global forums). Good judgment of the writer should be used in these circumstances, and should be documented on the Digest, Form CG-4229, or routing form used to avoid repeated corrections. For correspondence products developed for use within the United Nations, beyond routine correspondence, the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (12th Edition), is the current United Nations standard for spelling within the intergovernmental organization, and its specialized agencies such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO). Appendix A of this Manual provides writing resources including where to borrow a dictionary.
5. Use of *Italic*. Italic is used to differentiate or to give greater prominence to words and phrases. Overuse is to be avoided. The names of aircraft, vessels, and manned spacecraft are italicized. The prefix is never in italic, nor are related industry brand names. For example, the tall ship *Eagle* or CGC *Eagle* is correct. Variations may occur, such as providing the class and hull number. For example, the Fast Response Cutter CGC *Benjamin Bottoms* (WPC 1132).

6. Hyphenation and Separating Words. Use hyphens sparingly and never hyphenate a word at the end of a page. Avoid separating words in close association such as a person's name, abbreviated titles, and dates. If a full name must be split, do so after the first name, when there is no initial, or after the initial. Never split the name of a vessel.
7. Spacing. Between sentences one or two spaces may be used after the period, as long as it is consistent throughout the document. Paragraphs are typically left justified and single spaced. A space (1 line) is placed between each paragraph. If providing a hyperlink at the end of a sentence, it is best to leave an extra space before the period so the punctuation does not become part of the hyperlink and the reader may easily link to it. For example, visit the Coast Guard official website at www.uscg.mil/ .
8. Date Stamps. Type or stamp the date on the same day that correspondence is signed. The format for memorandum is: 4 January 2030 or 4 Jan 2030. The format for letters is January 4, 2030. If using a date within the content of correspondence, use the format 4 January 2030. The year may be omitted if it is understood (our meeting on 4 January).
9. Expressing Clock Time. Time is typically expressed representing either a 12 hour clock (civilian time) or a 24 hour clock (military time) based on the full 24 hours in a day. The preference in general correspondence is to use the 24 hour clock to avoid a confusion of time across zones. Military time must be expressed in the memorandum as a group of four digits, from 0001 to 2400, based on the 24-hour clock system. Civilian time is used when writing letters and must be expressed as ante meridiem (a.m.) or post meridiem (p.m.), meaning before and after midday, as in this example: 1 a.m. (not 1:00 a.m.) or 1:35 p.m. By convention 12 a.m. denotes 12 midnight and 12 p.m. denotes 12 noon. O'clock is not used. Some technology and office tracking systems may default to the 12 hour clock, and the user should reconcile with sound judgment applied.
10. Electronic, Original Handwritten, and S-Signatures. A digital signature is a technology that provides a valid method of electronic signature. A digital signature means the owner of a private signing key uses that key to create a unique mark (the signature) on an electronic document or file. An original handwritten signature is also known as a "wet" signature because ink was once required to dry. An S-signature is made by non-handwritten means through electronically or by typing and is placed in between two forward slash keystrokes. Chapter 5 in this manual provides discussion on electronic signature including the basic S-signature.

11. Plain Writing Act of 2010. This Act, as per Reference (a), was passed with a purpose to improve the effectiveness and accountability of Federal agencies to the public by promoting clear Government communications that the public can understand and use. This Act emphasizes writing that is clear, concise, well-organized, and consistent with other best practices appropriate to the subject and intended audience. Therefore, the Coast Guard writer should avoid jargon, redundancy, ambiguity, and obscurity. In addition, DHS encourages every employee to have a basic understanding of plain language and its benefit. The DHS plain writing website is available at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/offices/esec/Pages/PlainWriting.aspx . A useful DoD plain writing resource may be found at esd.whs.mil/DD/plainlanguage/ . The Coast Guard writer should use their best judgment based on what is being written and their final audience. Appendix A of this Manual provides writing resources.

12. Accessible Systems and Technology Program, Section 508. All Federal agencies are responsible for ensuring their information and services are accessible to persons with disabilities, as defined in 29 U.S.C.A. § 701. This includes information technology tools and electronic technology content, such as documents, web pages, presentations, social media content, blogs, and certain emails. The United States Access Board is responsible for developing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) accessibility standards in accordance with Reference (a) and (b). In January 2017, the U.S. Access Board issued revised guidelines and standards which may be reviewed at access-board.gov/guidelines-and-standards/communications-and-it/about-the-ict-refresh . The details are too vast to list in this Manual, however correspondence writers need to consider accessibility of their electronic products. Importantly, GSA provides a Government-wide IT Accessible Program and provides support on how to create written products and test for accessibility. This support site is available at Section508.gov/create and an overview may be read at Section508.gov . Please note that Section 508 accessibility does not apply to hard copy printed correspondence. Images and decorative characters in electronic content that add little value should be avoided. If an image is used, and the correspondence is sent electronically, it must be tagged with alternative text describing the image to ensure accessibility. Further compliance guidance may be obtained from the Coast Guard's Office of Accessible Systems and Technology Program (CG-612), at Section.508@uscg.mil.

13. Enclosure Term Preference. The Coast Guard uses "enclosure" for materials sent with correspondence either in paper or electronic format. DHS uses the term "Attachment" in its reference material.

B. Copies, Stationery, Addressing, and Mailing

1. Copies, Files, and the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. In order to maximize utility, when practical and not prohibited, use both sides of the paper for copies. Official correspondence sent to the Office of the Federal Register (OFR) must always be single sided. Limit color copies to final prints to save on color toner and paper. Specifically, minimize the cost to the Federal Government of creating, collecting, maintaining, using, disseminating, and disposing of print information. Centralize copies whenever possible to eliminate redundancy. The originator has an obligation to keep the original file (electronic or paper), in accordance with the Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series) for guidance. Avoid redundancy when correspondence is forwarded for signature especially when correspondence is short, routine, and self-explanatory. Be sure to limit information and courtesy copies to include only those with a genuine need to know. Note that the CG legal department has to comply with legal and court-mandated procedural rules and regulations which do not always match the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act. This is especially true in the amount of copies that have to be served to the court and other parties regardless of whether the correspondence is short or self-explanatory.
2. Stationery. The Coast Guard defines stationery as paper stock used for official letterhead, which includes return addressed envelopes. Software on the Standard Workstation enables users to format stationery in electronic form. Customized print stationery orders may be placed through Commandant (CG-612) and the Government Publishing Office (GPO) Regional Publishing Procurement Office (RPPO) for Flag Officer and Senior Executive Service (SES), commanding officers of Headquarter units, Activities Europe, and the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard in accordance with United States Coast Guard Printing and Binding Regulations, COMDTINST M5600.6 (series). Contact a Printing Specialist within CG-612 Directives and Publications Division at HQS-SMB-P-G@uscg.mil if stationery assistance is needed.
3. Addressing. Addressing correspondence and envelopes will be prepared as prescribed in the Coast Guard Postal Manual, COMDTINST M5110.1 (series). The Standard Distribution List, COMDTNOTE 5605 (series) is the source for Coast Guard unit addresses. Validate the address and use staff codes whenever possible. Choosing the correct size envelope or mailer is important as excessive packaging can lead to unnecessary or increased costs.

- a. Format addresses on envelopes with a uniform left margin and a maximum of 47 characters and spaces per line. Center the address and single space each line, blocked one below the other. Do not indent lines. Leave at least a ½ inch margin from the left and right edges of the envelope and at least ⅝ inch from the bottom of the envelope. Include all required information within addressee and return addressee areas. Do not type in the margins or clear area.
 - b. Font for envelopes must be block style and not stylized. Use Times New Roman, Courier, New Font or similar simple sans serif. Return addresses may be either preprinted in similar style, affixed with a label, printed, or stamped in black ink. Handwritten addresses are unacceptable.
4. Official Mail Address Format. All official mail must have a complete and proper return address. Official mail return addresses must notate in bold “DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY” in the upper left corner, directly above the return address and also notate “OFFICIAL BUSINESS” in the upper left corner, directly below the return address. Do not overlap the return address in the delivery address area. Be careful not to slant the address, as the lines must be parallel to the top and bottom edges of the envelope. Avoid punctuation except for the hyphen in the staff symbol and zip code. Limit address to a maximum of 5 lines.

Return address “from” sample:

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
 LINE 1
 LINE 2
 LINE 3
 LINE 4
 LINE 5 (must be CITY, STATE, and ZIP CODE +4)
OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Delivery address “to” sample:

LINE 1 INFORMATION
 LINE 2 ATTENTION (OFFICIAL TITLE/NAME)
 LINE 3 DELIVERY ADDRESS LINE 1 (STREET)
 LINE 4 DELIVERY
 LINE 5 (must be CITY, STATE, and ZIP CODE+4)

5. Window Envelopes. Unless for specialized use or mass mailing, the use of a window envelope is typically discouraged. Do not use window envelopes for sensitive mail or a content of a personal nature. High level officials should not receive window envelopes.

6. Envelopes and Mailers. Use envelopes or mailers slightly larger than the material being mailed and of sufficient strength to protect the contents during mail handling and delivery. Use number 10 standard letter size envelopes whenever possible. With a size of 4 ½ x 9 ½ inches, a standard paper size 8 ½ x 11 inches may be folded in thirds. Generally, documents with four or less pages should be folded and mailed in a letter size envelope. To qualify as First Class letter mail, envelopes must be at least 3 ½ inches by 5 inches (3 ½ inches by 5 ½ inches for international), and no larger than 6 ⅛ inches by 11 ½ inches and less than ¼ inch in thickness. Use large envelopes for mailings that cannot be folded (i.e. photographs, certificates, negatives, and bulk material, etc.). Note that envelopes larger than 12 inches by 15 inches exceed the flat rate and the cost is significantly higher.
7. Mailing and Stewardship. Consolidate outgoing mail whenever possible and avoid excessive packaging. All mail generated on the same day and destined for the same unit/location shall be placed together inside an appropriate mailer such as a large envelope or flat rate box, and sent via USPS or commercial carrier (FedEx/UPS, etc.) endorsed “Consolidated Mail.” The receiving mailroom will open and sort the contents for unit/location delivery.
8. Internal Mail. An official U.S. Government messenger envelope (Optional Form 65B) is used to send mail and packages between offices/units located within the same geographical area, building, and/or base through a centralized mail center. Enter the appropriate address including a suite, room, STOP, or office number, if available. Appropriate mailing label standards remain the same for the contents. Those who have a Standard Workstation account must keep their current location and status updated on the Global Address List (GAL) to avoid misrouting. Check with your local mailroom for options on this service, often referred to as guard mail.

9. Forms of Address, Salutation, and Complementary Close on Letters. The DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook (series) style and usage guidelines provide some examples of models of address and salutation. Appendix B of this Manual provides examples of Coast Guard models of address and salutation. A comprehensive source for DoD models of address is found in the United States Air Force Handbook AFH33-337, titled Tongue and Quill which is found at the Air Force E-Publishing website e-publishing.af.mil/ and in Appendix A. The Coast Guard style preference is to spell out military models of address fully, such as Dear Commander Lee, or Dear Petty Officer Gonzalez. For civilians if a title is not known, then using Mr., Ms., or Mx. such as Dear Mr. Nguyen, Dear Ms. Williams, or Dear Mx. Smith should be used. Mx. is the most accepted gender neutral title and should be used if a preference is unknown. If a title is known, the title should be used, for example Dear Mr. Ambassador Kim, or Dear Dr. Crawford. If a person specifically refers to themselves as Mrs., this may be used, otherwise the preference is Ms. To address girls under the age of 12 use Ms. or Miss, and to address boys under the age of 12, Mr. If the name or gender is unknown, use a professional or organizational title, such as Dear Director of Health and Safety.
10. The Standard Distribution List (SDL). The Standard Distribution List, COMDTNOTE 5605 provides Coast Guard unit addresses, phone numbers, and instructions on address labeling for the Coast Guard. The Manual also includes distribution symbols, Staff Symbols, Command Long Titles and Abbreviations for Correspondence, and a list of Coast Guard Cutters.

C. Coast Guard Correspondence Policy

1. Coordination. Correspond through your formal chain of command. This is especially important on substantive matters such as command decisions, policy issues, and other official correspondence. Such routing keeps intermediate commands informed and allows them to comment or approve. The coordination process may vary depending on your unit's formally established routing practice, such as SharePoint or other formalized processes. Authorized subordinates of different units may correspond directly with each other on purely routine matters. Clearly identify primary points of contact on coordination and local practice. Chapter 4 in this Manual provides more details on policy for coordination of correspondence.
2. Memorandum. Use the memorandum for correspondence within the Coast Guard or with other Federal agencies. Do not use the memorandum format when corresponding with the families of military personnel, private business, or the public. The use of the word memoranda is plural, and therefore an abbreviation of memos is frequently made. Memorandum is singular. Chapter 2 in this Manual provides more details on policy for the memorandum.

3. A Memorandum for the Record. This is exactly the same as a standard memorandum, except include in the subject line “A Memorandum for the Record.” Use this format in order to document decisions or policy that is agreed upon during a conversation that is not documented elsewhere. If there is a note taker or transcript documenting the decision, it is unnecessary to create this correspondence artifact unless requested. It is best to exchange this memorandum between the agreeing parties and record as a normal memorandum would be recorded. The writer may consider outlining each paragraph in order of purpose, problem, scope, agreement or understanding, and effective date. However, it is at the discretion of the writer.
4. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Memorandum of Agreement (MOA). A Memorandum must not be confused with an MOU or MOA. Originating offices of an MOU/MOA must ensure all interested program offices and the servicing legal office have reviewed. It may be appropriate for the Commandant to sign as a matter of protocol, even if the authority to sign has been delegated to an Assistant Commandant or other command. Memoranda of Understanding/Agreement, COMDTINST 5216.18 (series) provides more details on policy guidance with examples.
5. White Paper/Issue Paper. This correspondence is an authoritative issue paper used by many governments around the world and is often used by U.S. agencies. The white paper derives its name from the white paper stock cover on the issue paper. It typically includes research, data, and discussion in the form of a report or guide to help integrated product teams or decision makers understand an issue, solve a problem, and/or make a decision. As white papers in the Coast Guard are typically internal communications, they may be placed in, or enclosed to, a memorandum when routing.
6. Staff Study. Staff Studies are often written as a report and placed in official memorandum form. The purpose of a Staff Study is to engage in a process of critical thinking and problem solving, to analyze a problem, draw a conclusion, and to make a recommendation(s). This is an accepted format for problem-solutions for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The format is formal and is typically organized in the following order: Problem; Facts Bearing on the Problem; Discussion; Conclusion; and Action Recommendation. Additional structure and details may be found in United States Air Force Handbook AFH33-337, Tongue and Quill available at e-publishing.af.mil/ .
7. Letter. The business format will continue to be used with industry, local/state governments, and private citizens. A letter may also be used to address individuals when a personal tone is appropriate, such as in letters of commendation or condolence. Chapter 3 in this Manual provides more details on policy for the letter.

8. Award Letters, Formats, and Forms. Both the Coast Guard Military Medals and Awards Manual, COMDTINST M1650.25 (series) and Coast Guard Civilian Awards Manual, COMDTINST M12451.1 (series) provide detailed guidance.
9. Email and General Messages. In addition to email, General Messages may be used to communicate administrative information, which is defined as messages related to the organization of service forces, personnel management, unit logistics, individual and unit training, discipline, program changes, and other matters that are not operational. Other mechanisms include large official email distributions.
10. Email Etiquette. Email is often considered informal. However, each individual who is assigned an official Coast Guard email address must utilize it properly. This means being respectful in correspondence with others, even when discussing controversial or conflicting content. Email fonts and contrasts must be easily readable in standardized dark ink, with an 11 to 12 font size. Quotes on signature footers must be kept at minimum and generally avoided. The Coast Guard writer must be considerate of who they place on copy and consider need-to-know and relevance. Hours may be wasted reading emails that are simply unnecessary in a “reply all” or an “over copy” scenario. Blind copies may be occasionally necessary, but should be generally avoided. Before sending, the Coast Guard writer should double check their email draft to ensure that the content is concise and that both spelling and grammar are correct. If the email content contains a heightened level of emotion, especially anger, the Coast Guard writer should not send without first pausing to reconsider the content, and better yet recrafting at a later time after heightened emotions have reduced. Be considerate and respectful in both salutations and complimentary closings.
11. Standard Subject Identification Codes and Serial Numbers. The Standard Subject Identification Codes (SSIC) provides guidance on the four and five digit numbers that represent common Coast Guard subjects. Place an SSIC (known as a file number) on each page of a memorandum or letter. Find the SSIC that closely represents your subject. Be sure to file all correspondence by SSIC and date, in chronological order for the calendar year. The use of DoD SSIC codes must be discontinued, as the Coast Guard has its own code structure, as listed in the Information and Lifecycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series) contains Coast Guard SSIC codes.
12. Samples, Forms, and Templates. The Coast Guard has specifically created templates for each correspondence type contained in this Manual. These templates are accessible from the CG-612 Directives and Publications page on the CG Portal listed under Correspondence Templates. Appendix C provides select correspondence samples.

13. Paper. The Coast Guard uses business standard size 8½ x 11 inches white bond paper. Other sizes may apply, such as legal size 8½ x 14 inches, and other authorized and/or specialized stationery.
14. Type Fonts and Sizes. Use 12 font point size “Times New Roman” for official correspondence, unless authorized by another authority. Avoid unusual style types in official correspondence, as it gives an unprofessional appearance. While there are many types of typography and design choices, it is best to align to foundational principles of readability for both paper and web content. When creating official correspondence, use type fonts and sizes that make correspondence easy to read and understand, and use standardized software to improve accessibility compliance.
15. Margins. For correspondence on standard size paper, allow 1 inch top, bottom, left, and right margins on each page. Do not right, center, full justify, or use proportional spacing. For Directives, the left justified margin should be 1 inch, the right unjustified margin should be no less than ¾ inches, and the top and bottom margins should be 1 inch, with the header and footer at ½ inch.
16. Print and Electronic Ink. Black ink on white paper is the preferred choice for official business content. Date stamps, when applicable, may be in black. Electronic content shall ensure color contrast meets Section 508 standards.

D. Department-Level Correspondence Policy and Templates

1. Department-Level Correspondence Formats. The Coast Guard works with the DHS Office of the Executive Secretary (ESEC) component liaison to receive and submit necessary Department-level correspondence. This includes Briefing Books and Interagency Coordination, Administrative, Budget and Logistics Matters, and content for Congressional Actions. There are many points of contact for the differing and specialized correspondence needs which can be found in the DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook (series) at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/offices/ESEC .

2. Controlled DHS Executive Level Correspondence. In support of controlled correspondence, specific offices within each component, including the Coast Guard, are designated to manage their agencies individual correspondence process and serve as the primary point of contact for Department-wide coordination and clearance needs. The ESEC manages letters and other documents addressed to the Secretary and Deputy Secretary. The ESEC determines the parameters of the correspondence, including the DHS component lead, which components need to clear the response, the appropriate signing official, and the priority and urgency of the response. The ESEC reserves the right to decrease the number of days allotted or request a response be expedited. High priority correspondence has a 10 business day turn around, while routine and general public correspondence has a 15 business day turn around. The Coast Guard adheres to this timeline. Guidance on Department-level coordination and clearance, responses, interim responses, thank you notes, enclosures post-engagement letters, congratulatory and employee recognition letters may be found in the DHS ESEC Executive Correspondence Handbook (series) at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/offices/ESEC .
3. Department-Level Memoranda (or memo). Memoranda generated by a Component and intended for the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, or Chief of Staff's review or approval generally fall into three categories: Action memo (seeking decision or action), Cover memo (summary or background of primary document), and Information memo (Coast Guard to DHS ESEC communication).
4. Templates for Department-Level Memoranda. The ESEC has created specific templates for each memo type containing important completion instructions and formatting requirements. These templates are internally available at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/offices/ESEC .
5. Templates for Department-Level Congressional Reports. Congressional Reports have specialized guidelines. A Congressional Report template is provided in the ESEC handbook in hyperlink under the Guidelines for Preparing Congressional Reports and is downloadable document at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/org/offices/esec/Page/Handbook.aspx . The Coast Guard writer should work with their assigned point of contact for specific instructions and may seek additional advisement from the Coast Guard Office of Congressional and Governmental Congressional Affairs (CG-0921) as applicable at HQS-DG-HouseofReps@uscg.mil or HQS-DG-Senate@uscg.mil.

CHAPTER 2. THE MEMORANDUM

A. Memorandum Use in the Coast Guard

1. The Coast Guard Memorandum. This remains the primary means of formalized correspondence to communicate both within the Coast Guard and within the framework of the Federal Government. The Coast Guard has a partially customizable memorandum header image similar to letterhead, and the memorandum should not be sent without this header image. A less formalized way of communications is content within the body of an email. An email sent with a signed memorandum enclosed, is therefore more formalized.
2. Memorandum Stationery. A memorandum must use official stationery titled *Memorandum*. This memorandum letterhead may be electronically generated, utilized from a template, or may be in print format. Contact the Printing Specialist within CG-612 Directives and Publications Division at HQS-SMB-P-G@uscg.mil if stationery assistance is needed.
3. Dates. Every memorandum must include a date. The date may be hand stamped or typed in. Place the date below the SSIC on the actual date the memorandum was signed by the final signatory in the routing chain.
4. SSIC on First, and Subsequent pages. Place an SSIC on each page of the memorandum. Check the Information and Life Cycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series) for the most appropriate SSIC code. The most specific code should be used. If a memo is two or more pages, the subject line, the date, and the SSIC need to appear on all pages.
5. Serial Numbers. A serial number may be locally generated if needed for high volume correspondence and tracking. When there is a local serial number, this number is typed or stamped either immediately above the SSIC, to the right with a forward slash SSIC/serial or underneath before the date
6. From and Signature Line. Every memorandum must have a “From” line. Use the signer’s name or the commanding officer’s abbreviated title and staff symbol as appropriate. The precise title and symbol can be found in the Standard Distribution List, COMDTNOTE 5605 Standard Distribution List (SDL). Capitalization or upper/lowercase of the name is authorized. The Unit/title must be capitalized. The signing official will sign on the “From” line.
7. Signing a Memorandum “for.” If signing “for” another Coast Guard member, the word “for” in lower case shall be penned to the left of the signature line and signed. If using a template for digital signing, follow the template prompts, which may place the “for” and an electronic signature box to the slight right of the “From” line. Both are acceptable.

8. To Line. Address correspondence to the office or commanding officer of a unit, unless the memorandum is being sent directly to an individual. Depending on the nature of the memorandum, creating a copy to the unit instead of the individual may be appropriate.
9. Thru Lines External to Command/Unit. Use a “Thru” line when one or more offices or units outside your own must see a memo before it reaches the addressee. List commanding officers in the “Thru” line. The routing order is numbered. When going up a chain of command, list the next higher command from your own first. When going down a chain of command, list the next lowest command.
10. Thru Lines Internal to Command/Unit. “Thru” line may be used when writing an internal command memo requiring chain of command visibility.
11. Subject Line. A concise subject line is written in capital letters and is typically 10 words or less. The exact subject line is repeated on subsequent pages in the header.
12. References. Unless required by your office, avoid unnecessary or complicated references. Avoid using obsolete relics, such as the abbreviation NOTAL, which stands for “not to,” or “nor required by.” A memorandum may list the most important references in the last communication or no reference at all. When the Coast Guard writer responds to an earlier communication, the writer need not list the same references in the opening. Instead, the writer should proceed to the main point.
13. Reply to the Attention of. If a primary point of contact differs from the Coast Guard signature on the memorandum, include a point of contact name and phone number. This may seem redundant, however adding a technical specialist or program manager may be appropriate depending on the content of the memorandum. Delete this section if not used.
14. Consistency. A Coast Guard writer should be consistent in style and format in all correspondence-writing, including the memorandum. For example, the way staff symbols, and/or titles are written in the “To,” “From,” and “Thru” lines should be consistent and in accordance with the SDL.
15. Pen and Ink Changes. Where practicable a memorandum should be error free. Internal correspondence should not include more than two pen and ink changes unless the memorandum is routed for input of signature or another authority within the Coast Guard. Memoranda to other agencies should not include pen and ink changes.
16. Ending the Memo. Place the # symbol centered two lines below the last paragraph to indicate the end of the memorandum.

B. Decision Memorandum.

1. Creating a Decision Memorandum. When requesting decision to a single addressee, it is appropriate to type a decision block two lines below the last paragraph, but before the closing symbol “#” of the memo under the body of the memo in the below format. If the decision maker is not a commanding officer or higher, indicate the decision authority by position title. Below is a suggested format, however, “other” may be omitted.

_____	Approve
_____	Disapprove
_____	Other

#

C. Endorsements within a Memorandum.

1. Endorsement(s) to Memorandum. An endorsement is used to comment on a memorandum in routing, based on the original memorandum, or is used to comment on any subsequent endorsement during the clearance/routing process. Because of changes made in routing, in turn, the order of any remaining “Thru” addressees could also be altered, and more may be added.
2. Same Page Endorsement. An endorsement should be completed on the same page as the original, if possible. However, technology security features may not make this possible. If not possible, start a new page endorsement. If two or more “Thru” addressees remain, re-number the addressees in parenthesis on the endorsement (1), (2), for example.
3. New Page Endorsement. When technical challenges emerge, or additional content is likely to be added exceeding the original page, starting a new page for an endorsement is acceptable. The writer’s judgment should be used. Every new page endorsement must start with clean stationery (no memorandum heading) and repeat the SSIC just above the date. Identify the basic memo in the endorsement-number line, and use the exact subject line already used. Similar to the same page endorsement if two or more “Thru” addresses remain, re-number them in parenthesis.

4. Endorsed as Approved without Comment. An endorser must sign and date the “Thru” line if the endorsement package is being forwarded without comment. Approval is implied. Any “Thru” addressees will count as signatures. Send copies to the action addressee and to all “Thru” addresses who have yet to endorse the memo.
5. Providing Copies during Endorsement. Copies are to be provided for any earlier “Thru” addressees, if requested, and to any earlier information addressee only if the endorsement is significant, as described in this paragraph. Add these addressees to the “Copy” line. Routine endorsements include “forwarded,” “forwarded for consideration,” and “forwarded recommending approval.” Significant endorsements include “forwarded recommending disapproval,” “readdressed and forwarded,” and those with substantive legal or programmatic comments. Copies may be provided for any information addressees the Coast Guard writer chooses to add. Include these in the “Copy” line. To the right of each of these addressees, type the word “Complete” to show that the endorsement includes copies made of the standard memo, enclosures, and prior endorsements. Always provide a copy for the originator of the standard memo and a copy for file.
6. References in Endorsements. Include only important references and do not duplicate references already in the original memorandum. If adding additional references, continue ordering in alphabetical sequence from the original memorandum.
7. Enclosures in Endorsements. On the enclosure line, do not repeat any enclosures shown in the standard memorandum or prior endorsements. Send any enclosure you may add to the action addressee. The enclosure’s importance will determine whether others before your endorsement should receive it. Check with the originator to determine if they have the enclosure or need a copy. It may be a standardized enclosure, or not practical to send.

CHAPTER 3. THE BUSINESS LETTER

A. Business Letter Use in the Coast Guard

1. The Business Letter. Use the business letter to correspond with non-Federal entities including individuals and businesses. Occasionally, a business letter may be used for correspondence within Federal entities when a memorandum would not be appropriate – such as a condolence or congratulatory letter.
2. Short Business Letters. A short letter is typically no more than 8 lines and contains less than 100 words. It should be left justified, double spaced (2 lines) within paragraph(s), and 1 to 2 paragraphs with complementary closing. It should be placed on the page with greater attention to visual appeal, side margins may be adjusted for custom text up to 2 inch side margins.
3. Letter Stationery. Every official business letter must begin with an official Coast Guard letterhead to show its origin. This letterhead may be electronically generated, utilized from a template, or may be in print format. Contact the Printing Specialist within CG-612 Directives and Publications Division at HQS-SMB-P-G@uscg.mil if stationery assistance is needed.
4. Letter Dates. Expressed in month-day-year. January 4, 2030. A comma separates the numbers.
5. References. Refer to earlier communications within the text body of the letter; do not call them references.
6. Text. Left justified, single line space (1 line) within paragraphs and avoid indenting or numbering of primary paragraphs. Depending on the nature of the letter, sub paragraphs may be indented with letter and numbering in basic paragraph format.
7. Letter Addressee. If writing to a company, address to the company with an attention line “Attn:” on the inside address.
8. Salutation. Make the salutation agree with the first line of the address. Should the Coast Guard writer not know the name of the individual who will be receiving the correspondence, use a collective salutation such as “Dear Sir or Madam:”.
9. Complimentary Letter Close. Use the capitalized word “Sincerely” for the complimentary close. This should be placed on the second line below the text, ¼ inch to the right of the center point.
10. Enclosures. If the business letter has an enclosure, briefly mention the enclosure within the text and indicate the number of enclosures below such as “3 Enclosures.” The Coast Guard writer may also choose to list each enclosure with

a description such as Enclosure (1) Title of enclosure. Either format may be used.

11. Copy Block. A “Copy” block may be used in a business letter. Identify the format from the SDL and write out the command long title and address.
12. Blind Copy Block. A “Blind Copy” block is for internal distribution and for the original file copy only. Do not list a “Blind Copy” on the actual letter sent.
13. Mail Window Letter. This letter is almost the same as a business letter, but the format allows for mailing in a clear number 10 envelope window. The placement of the addresses may need to be slightly modified, must take no more than 4 lines, must not extend past the middle of the page, and not be sensitive or personal in nature. The address must appear in the window regardless of how the letter might shift during mailing. The U.S. Postal Service provides various window size requirements. Please visit www.USPS.gov for clarifications.
14. Optional Subject Line in Lieu of Salutation. A subject line, in rare circumstances, may replace the salutation on a generic or routine administrative letter.

B. The Flag Letter

1. The Flag Letter. Issued by Coast Guard Admirals and Senior Executives, this letter is typically written on specialty stationery with 1 inch margins on all sides. The exact format of the Flag Letter is at the discretion of Admirals or Senior Executive Service leaders. Considering the significance placed on these letters by recipients, the overall appearance should be suitable for presentation or framing.
 - a. Format. This letter should be single spaced, unless it is less than 9 lines, then it should be double spaced for visual appeal. Date upon signature, and indent paragraphs with tabs. Tradition has placed this in 10 point Courier font. Signature blocks are in all capitals. Enclosures are uncommon but may be used and are justified left with the margin, two lines below the signature block. Only use a blind copy block for a file record if needed, do not place a copy block on the letter itself.
 - b. Administrative Remarks. Any military member receiving a Flag letter should have their letter submitted as an Administrative Remark. See Administrative Remarks, Form CG-3307, COMDTINST 1000.14 (series).

C. Letters prepared for DHS and Other Branches of Government

1. Letters prepared for DHS. DHS issues guidance and templates, updated as DHS leadership preferences or congressional requirements change. For the latest templates, please see the DHS Executive Correspondence Handbook (series) and associated templates available at dhsconnect.dhs.gov/offices/ESEC .
2. Congressional Letters. The Coast Guard writer may seek advisement from the Coast Guard Office of Congressional and Governmental Congressional Affairs (CG-0921) as applicable at HQS-DG-HouseofReps@uscg.mil or HQS-DG-Senate@uscg.mil.

CHAPTER 4. COORDINATION

A. Coordination Policy for the Originator and Coordinator

1. Originator. The originator is located in the office where the correspondence is created and coordinates by obtaining an agreement among offices that have a substantial interest in a proposed correspondence action and/or document. An important responsibility of the originator is to resolve major differences among stakeholders as early as possible. To coordinate effectively, the originator must decide who the stakeholders should be before the originating correspondence is signed with consideration for the impact of the correspondence and the final audience. The Coast Guard Organizational Manual, COMDTINST M5400.7 (series) can assist with identifying functional responsibilities, however, due to organizational changes, additional research and efforts may be necessary to identify both offices and individuals with equity.
2. Coordinator. The primary responsibility of the coordinator is to compile all comments from each stakeholder. This coordination may occur through concurrent, sequential, and conference clearance processes, and can be sent electronically or physically. Routing Slip Form CGHQ-6046 may be useful. SharePoint is often also used to facilitate coordination.
3. Concurrent Clearance. Typically, the fastest way to obtain clearance is to utilize SharePoint or a similar clearance method where the document is sent to all stakeholders at one time with a suspense date. A Concurrent Clearance Form (CG-4590) may be useful to the Coast Guard writer. If coordinating concurrently, be sure to consolidate comments into a matrix listing. Comments are typically identified by reviewers as being administrative (A), substantive (S), or critical (C). All comments must be reviewed, considered, and incorporated where applicable. Substantive comments should be adjudicated, while critical comments must be adjudicated. Any unresolved critical comments must be provided to the higher signature authority, such as commanding officer for final adjudication. Consult with the servicing legal office or other subject matter expert as needed, as some content may not be changed or waived by law. If during the concurrent clearance process the critical or substantive comments change the content substantively, a second concurrent clearance may be required.
4. Sequential Clearance. This correspondence clearance process is typically used for an individual to review correspondence in sequence, often “up the chain.” When routing chains are short, sequential clearance is practical, as each input is reviewed and adjudicated one at a time. Often this type of coordination is placed in a physical folder with a paper routing slip, however the increased use of electronic signatures makes electronic routing of the sequence faster.

5. Conference Clearance. When the usual methods of coordination are not sufficient and differences remain unresolved, an option is to gather coordinators for a meeting and seek resolution. This is called conference clearance. This may be conducted in person or virtually. If major changes result from the meeting, the coordinator will need to assess if part or all of the document must undergo further clearance with those who originally reviewed the document and were not part of the conference.
6. General Correspondence Controls. Impose realistic due dates. Request a response only when there is a compelling reason to receive a reply by that date. When choosing the due dates, allow for enough time for routing inside the chain of command, review by the command, and time to reach the addressee factoring in distance or location. Due dates may need to be extended for mobile units, overseas activities, and during holidays or other conditions such as a state of emergency. Include time for the responding office to gather information and prepare and return a response through mail screening.
7. Routing to Follow When Rushed. In the rare urgent circumstance the Coast Guard writer cannot route a memorandum through the chain of command, send the original to the addressee. At the same time send out separate copy(s) to all "Thru" addressees. In the copy block include the word "Advance" to read: COMDT (CG-6) Advance. Be sure to include the reason for this method in the accompanying routing documentation. It is best to get authorization before proceeding in this manner.
8. Trace Late Replies. A tracer may be created to track missing or time sensitive late correspondence. If practicable, first contact the command that the correspondence was originally sent. Then contact the command by phone or email and forward a copy of the original correspondence by either email or hardcopy with the term and date "TRACER, 04 Jul 2030."
9. Other Coordination. Be vigilant that there may be a separate clearance process for some Coast Guard content outside of correspondence including, but not limited to, regulations, policy guidance and documents, and Navigational and Vessel Inspection Circulars (NVIC).

CHAPTER 5. POLICY ON SIGNATURE

A. Electronic Signature

1. Digital Signature Technology. A digital signature is a technology that provides a valid method of electronic signature. Digital signature(s) means the owner of a private signing key uses that key to create a unique mark on an electronic document or file. The recipient employs the owner's public key to validate that the electronic signature was generated with the associated private key. This verifies the document was not altered. There are some cases when an electronic signature is not authorized, not suitable, or impractical and therefore, the traditional physical signature(s) must be signed in dark ink. Blue or black ink is equally acceptable for correspondence only. Some documents, such as Coast Guard regulations, must follow e-signature guidelines from the Office of the Federal Register. Additional guidance on the electronic signature and related record keeping may be found in Electronic Signatures and Management of Electronically Signed Records, COMDTINST 5200.5 (series) and in U.S. Coast Guard Cybersecurity Manual, COMDTINST M5500.13 FOUO (series).
2. Use of Digital Signatures. In addition to the digital signing of non-rulemaking documents, email messages requiring message integrity or nonrepudiation must be digitally signed. Note, this rule may not apply to emails and documents that relate to regulatory and other legal matters. Nonrepudiation provides assurance that a sender of data, or in this case an email, is provided with proof of delivery, and the recipient is provided proof of the sender's identity, so that neither can deny having processed the data in question. An email containing an attachment or embedded active content must be digitally signed. If the Coast Guard writer does not have their digital signature enabled for email, place a helpdesk ticket through CGFIXIT.

B. S-signature

1. The S-signature. The S-signature is made by non-handwritten means through electronically or mechanically typed and is primarily used in the Coast Guard for electronic messages, directives, and other openly published documents. The S-signature may be used in general email correspondence where creating a signature may be more difficult. Similar to considerations with an electronic signature, the Coast Guard writer must be vigilant and identify what type of signature is most appropriate. This signature may not be appropriate for rulemaking and other legal documents. An S-signature should look similar to this sample: /King C. Neptune/. Note the required forward slash before and after the typed name. The Coast Guard S-signature must include a legal name, and not be representational or hidden. If holding a title, it is appropriate to include directly beneath the S-signature. Precedence for use by government was set by the Patent and Trademark Office under 37 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §1.4, Nature of Correspondence and Signature Requirements.

2. New Format. An additional format was previously designated for the S-signature: Name /s/. This format is obsolete. The Coast Guard writer should use the new format as indicated in the immediately preceding paragraph.

C. Delegation of Signature Authority and Format

1. Delegation of Signature Authority. A commanding officer may delegate signature authority to both military and civilian subordinates for specific purposes and may authorize those subordinates to delegate this authority further. All delegations of signature authority must be made in writing, to position and title rather than in name alone, and include a brief outline of the types of documents authorized. The delegation memorandum needs to contain the signature of the commanding officer.
2. Limitations to Signature Authority Delegation. A commanding officer may not delegate signature authority for documents that establish policy, announce changes to the activities, missions, or efficiency, and are addressed to higher authority, deal with matters under the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), or are required by law or regulation (e.g. ship's logs).
3. Subsequent Delegation. Unless otherwise restricted by law or policy, authorized subordinates may redelegate signature authority to the lowest responsible position related to the function involved. However, scope of this authority must be articulated by the commanding officer.
4. Signature Authority by Subordinates within a Command. Subordinates may sign correspondence that falls within their area of responsibility unless a signature of a higher official is required. If in doubt, obtain authorization before signing. When subordinates sign an official letter, such as a business letter, under this delegated authority, they shall sign "By direction." Only a few select senior staff members are authorized to sign over their commanding officer's title.

5. Delegation Signature Memorandum and Letter “Acting.” The memorandum “Acting” and letter “Acting” signature examples are presented. Utilize “Acting” when the signer has been formally appointed to temporarily replace either the commanding officer or a subordinate who signs a letter by title. For both the memorandum and the letter the signature block contains the information of the person signing, and the “Acting” title is inserted. Please note that either a wet or electronic signature are used, not both at the same time.

Sample signature *memorandum “Acting”* when formally appointed to replace the commanding officer.

Electronic Signature Block

Wet Signature of person signing

FIRST (or first initial) M. LAST (UPPER or Upper L. Case)

Acting Title or STAFF SYMBOL (UPPER or Upper L. Case for Title)

Sample signature *letter “Acting”* when formally appointed to replace the commanding officer.

Sincerely,

[Wet or Electronic Signature]

First M. Last

FIRST (or first initial) M. LAST

Military grade or SES Spelled out

Acting, Job title

U.S. Coast Guard

6. Delegation Signature Memorandum “for” and Letter “By direction.” The memorandum “for” and letter “By direction” examples are presented. Sign a memorandum “for” an absent official and when a delay might result in a missed urgent deadline. Sign a letter “By direction” when designated formally to do so. Add the word “for” before the typed name of the intended signing official. Note this may be penned in dark ink if wet signed rather than electronically signed. The absent officials’ name remains in the signature block, the person signing signs their own signature. Please note that either a wet or electronic signature are used, not both at the same time.

Sample signature *memorandum “for”* an absent official.

for: Electronic Signature of person signing

Wet Signature of person signing

for FIRST (or first initial) M. LAST (UPPER or Upper L. Case)
STAFF SYMBOL such as COMDT (CG-6)

Sample signature *letter “By direction”* as designated. Where an electronic signature may be used, it may be more personable and sometimes more appropriate for a wet signature on an external letter. Judgment of the Coast Guard writer should be used.

Sincerely,

[Wet or Electronic Signature]

First M. Last
FIRST (or first initial) M. LAST
Military grade or SES Spelled out
Job title
U.S. Coast Guard
By direction

CHAPTER 6. RECORDS MANAGEMENT, PRIVACY, AND CYBERSECURITY

A. Records Management Guidance.

1. Records Management. Records Management is a program outlining policy and procedures applied to all government information, allowing end users the ability to identify, save, and remove or retire information according to federal statute. All correspondence is required by the Federal Records Act of 1950 (as amended), Reference (d), to be identified as records. The correspondence writer can review the Information and Lifecycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series) for more information on Coast Guard recordkeeping requirements.
2. Record Keeping. Coast Guard writers must ensure that all products (electronic and paper) carry the appropriate records management identification code(s). Federal record keeping requirements are derived from these identification code(s), known as SSIC. SSIC codes are annotated in the Information and Lifecycle Management Manual, COMDTINST M5212.12 (series). Contact a Records Management Specialist within CG-611 Records Management Division at HQS-SMB-CG-611-Records@uscg.mil for further clarification.

B. Privacy.

1. Privacy. The Coast Guard writer should be cautious not to erode privacy protections and must protect personally identifiable information (PII) at all times. For example, if correspondence containing PII is approved to be sent to a personal email (such as for Coast Guard Auxiliary), or emailed outside of the .mil domain, the correspondence must be protected through either password or encryption and digital signature. Note that digital signatures must also be used when sending Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), unit Critical Information List (CIL), and/or protected Privacy-related information not releasable to the public. Additional guidance may be found in the mandated *Privacy at DHS: Protecting Personal Information* training, and in U.S. Coast Guard Cybersecurity Manual, COMDTINST M5500.13 FOUO (series) and The Coast Guard Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts Manual, COMDTINST M5260.3 (series).

C. Cybersecurity.

1. Security Considerations. The Coast Guard writer must verify who they are sending correspondence to both inside and outside the organization. Digital signatures assist the Coast Guard writer in ensuring the originator is the actual author, is the originating source, and that the email or attachments were not altered in transit. Email addresses should be verified. Group distributions should be used sparingly, and members validated regularly for currency and need-to-know. Notify the group owner if a distribution is no longer necessary. Emails sent to incorrect addresses may result in unintended consequences and reflect poorly upon the Coast Guard. Additional guidance may be found in U.S. Coast Guard Cybersecurity Manual, COMDTINST M5500.13 FOUO (series).

Appendix A. Resources for the Coast Guard Correspondence Writer

DHS Virtual Library

DHS Librarians have worked to develop new connections, facilitating a culture of sharing. The library services team will continue to serve as a hub, connecting people with knowledge. This is a great resource available to the Coast Guard writer.

DHS Connect dhsconnect.dhs.gov/

Go to the employees tab, then to library drop down menu, next search your books or journals, holdings include:

Protocol: 25th Anniversary Edition: The Complete Handbook of Diplomatic Official and Social Uses. United States. Book by M.J. McCaffree, P. Innis and R. Sand.

Style Manual: An Official Guide to the Form and Style of Federal Government Publishing / U.S. Government Publishing Office 2016. 31st edition.

Available at: govinfo.gov/gpo-style-manual

The Tongue and Quill. 2015. AF Handbook 33-337.

Available at e-publishing.af.mil/ .

Dictionaries

Dictionary by Merriam-Webster.com. 2020 Merriam-Webster, Incorporated.

Available at merriam-webster.com/ .

American Dictionary. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary, Unabridged*. Merriam-Webster. (1961, revised). Available at DHS Virtual Library and Coast Guard Headquarters Law Library.

British Dictionary and the United Nations Standard. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. 2011 12th edition. Available at DHS Virtual Library and Coast Guard Headquarters Law Library.

Plain Language and Grammar Websites

[Plainlanguage.gov](https://plainlanguage.gov/), 2020. This is an official website of the United States Government. This website is augmented by several non-profit organizations and professional groups to support plain language writing. Several open source dictionaries, thesaurus, and grammar sites are available at plainlanguage.gov/ .

The United States Congress, Washington D.C.

Library of Congress, 2020. This is an official website of the United States Government. There are many historical sources, including historical correspondence available at loc.gov/collections . Coast Guard writers may gain local access with a user registration.

Appendix B. Coast Guard Models of Address

Addressee as listed in “Title” below. Address in letter and on envelope includes full rank/rate, full name and service abbreviation, followed by the address. Salutation includes Dear Full Title (Last Name), and complementary close of sincerely. Use of other official titles such as Officer Candidate and Cadet Ranks are also permissible.

Coast Guard Military Service Rates and Ranks

<i>Paygrade</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Abbreviation</i>
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Enlisted Rates of the Coast Guard

E-1	Seaman Recruit	(SR)
E-2	Seaman Apprentice or Fireman Apprentice	(SA) (FA)
E-3	Seaman or Fireman	(SN) (FN)
E-4	Petty Officer Third Class	(PO3)
E-5	Petty Officer Second Class	(PO2)
E-6	Petty Officer First Class	(PO1)
E-7	Chief Petty Officer	(CPO)
E-8	Senior Chief Petty Officer	(SCPO)
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer	(MCPO)

Most Senior Enlisted Position Titles

E-9	Command Master Chief Petty Officer	(CMC)
E-9	Coast Guard Reserve Forces Master Chief	(CGRF-MC)
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard	(MCPOCG)
E-9	Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard Reserve	(MCPO-CGR)

Warrant Officer Ranks

W-1	Chief Warrant Officer (rank not currently in use)	(CWO)
W-2	Chief Warrant Officer 2	(CWO2)
W-3	Chief Warrant Officer 3	(CWO3)
W-4	Chief Warrant Officer 4	(CWO4)

Officer Ranks

O-1	Ensign	(ENS)
O-2	Lieutenant Junior Grade	(LTJG)
O-3	Lieutenant	(LT)
O-4	Lieutenant Commander	(LCDR)
O-5	Commander	(CDR)
O-6	Captain	(CAPT)
O-7	Rear Admiral (Lower Half)	(RDML)
O-8	Rear Admiral (Upper Half)	(RADM)
O-9	Vice Admiral	(VADM)
O-10	Admiral	(ADM)

Appendix C. Select Correspondence Samples

Samples of Coast Guard Memoranda

Blank Memorandum	C-2
Memorandum	C-3
Blank Memorandum for the Record	C-5
Decision Memorandum	C-6
Same Page Endorsement Memorandum	C-7
New Page Endorsement Memorandum	C-8

Samples of Coast Guard Letters

Blank Business Letter	C-9
Business Letter	C-10
Blank Flag Letter	C-11

Coordination Correspondence Forms

(Retrieve latest version at cg.portal.uscg.mil/pages/main.aspx)

Digest Form CG-4229
Concurrent Clearance Form CG-4590
Routing Slip Form CGHQ-6046

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State Zip Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC

dd Mmm yyyy

MEMORANDUM

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Name MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

Reply to Staff Symbol
Attn of: Name of Point of Contact
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

To: Name or Staff Symbol]
Thru: [Enter Thru Name or Staff Symbol]

Subj: [ENTER SUBJECT]

Ref: (a) [Optional Reference]

1. Start typing here.
2. Ensure two lines separate MEMORANDUM and "From" line.
3. Ensure two lines separate the last sentence of the paragraph and the "#."
4. Ensure two lines separate the "#" and "Enclosure."

#

Enclosure: (1) [Optional Enclosure]

Dist: [Optional Dist]

Copy: [Optional Copy]

Blind Copy: [Optional Blind Copy]

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State ZIP Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC

dd Mmm yyyy

MEMORANDUM

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Name MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

Reply to Office Staff Symbol
Attn of: First Name MI. Last Name
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

To: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Thru: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Subj: HOW TO PREPARE A MEMORANDUM

Ref: (a) The Coast Guard Correspondence Manual, COMDTINST M5216.6

1. This is a sample of how to write a memorandum. The memorandum is for official correspondence internal to the Coast Guard and other Federal agencies unless a different format is called for. Use names, titles, or staff symbols in the "From, To, and Thru" lines. The optional "Reply to Attn of" should be used for the primary contact if not the sender. Delete for visual appeal if not in use. "Thru" addressees may approve without comment by putting their initials and date in the "Thru" line.

2. The Coast Guard writer must sign their name directly above the "From" line. If signing electronically, place the electronic signature box just above the characters in last name. For readability and visual appeal, the electronic signature block should not cover any written words nor exceed the height of the letter "M" at the end of MEMORANDUM. If signing "for" another individual, this needs to be indicated by writing "for" in lowercase to the left of your wet signature, or typing "for" to the left of your electronic signature box.

3. The date is directly below the SSIC. If the memorandum is two or more pages, the "Subj" line would appear on the same line as the SSIC (see next page of this memorandum for format). In a rare case that a serial number is used, place it.

4. Your content should be written in paragraph form and each paragraph numbered. After your content, including decision block is written, place "#" two lines below the last paragraph to indicate the end of the memorandum. The "Copy:" block, if applicable, appears on all copies. The "Blind Copy" block only appears on the file copies remaining within the unit.

5. For multiple addresses, a "Distribution" line may be substituted for the "To" line. Change the "To" line to read "Distribution." Next, at the bottom of the memo on the second line directly below "Enclosure," place "Dist". When enclosures are not used, place "Dist" on the second line below "#".

#

Enclosure: (1) Listed in order of appearance in the memo
(2) Never listed in the reference section
(3) Label enclosures when practical

Dist: Used for multiple addresses only
Replace "To" line with "Distribution"
List all addressees

Copy: Optional and appears on all copies if used.
Short Title of Information Addressee
Short Title of Second Information Addressee
Distribution List (for multi-page copy distribution)

Blind Copy: Used only if applicable
Appears only on the file copies remaining within the unit

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Staff Symbol: CG-XXXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC

dd Mmm yyyy

MEMORANDUM

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Name MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

Reply to Staff Symbol
Attn of: Name of Point of Contact
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

To: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Thru: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Subj: MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Ref: (a) [Optional Reference]

1. Start typing here. The subject must reflect MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD. The subject line may be customized further to include the more specific topic such as memorandum for the record on "X" decision. Ensure two lines separate the last sentence of the paragraph and the "#."

#

Enclosure: (1) [Optional Enclosure]

Dist: [Optional Dist]

Copy: [Optional Copy]

Blind Copy: [Optional Blind Copy]

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State ZIP Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC

dd Mmm yyyy

MEMORANDUM

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Name MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

Reply to Staff Symbol
Attn of: Name of Point of Contact
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx

To: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Thru: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Subj: DECISION MEMORANDUM

Ref: (a) [Optional Reference]

1. Start typing here. This is a basic example of a decision memorandum. Commands and offices may have more complex decision memorandum formats for multiple Courses of Action. The basic memorandum format should still be followed.

2. Last paragraph. Ensure two lines separate the Approve line and the last sentence of the last paragraph. The "Other" may be omitted if not needed.

_____ Approve

_____ Disapprove

_____ Other (Optional Line)

#

Enclosure: (1) [Optional Enclosure]

Dist: [Optional Dist]

Copy: [Optional Copy]

Blind Copy: [Optional Blind Copy]

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State Zip Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXX
Phone: (202) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (202) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC

dd Mmm yyyy

MEMORANDUM

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Name MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

To: Name or Staff Symbol

Thru: (1) First Thru Name/Staff Symbol
(2) Second Thru Name/Staff Symbol

Subj: HOW TO PREPARE ENDORSEMENTS

1. Same page endorsements is the preferred method. This example cites one enclosure. For the "From, To, and Thru" blocks above, it is acceptable to use staff symbols only.

2. For the "Thru" line, renumber addressees in parentheses as described above. Ensure two blank lines are used to separate between this last sentence and the "#".

#

dd Mmm yyyy

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)

From: First Initial MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

To: First Name MI. Last Name or Staff Symbol

Thru: First Name MI. Last Name or Staff Symbol

1. This section begins the first endorsement statement. Keep on the same page if the endorsement will fit on one page and the endorsement is likely to be signed without revisions.

2. It is unnecessary to repeat the SSIC or subject line on a same page endorsement.

#

Copy: Unit Name

SSIC
dd Mmm yyyy

SECOND ENDORSEMENT on [Reference "From" line of originator] memo SSIC of dd Mmm
yyyy

(Wet or Electronic Signature here)
From: First Initial MI. Last Name
Staff Symbol

To: First Name MI. Last Name or
Staff Symbol

Subj: HOW TO PREPARE ENDORSEMENT

1. This section begins the new page endorsement statement. Start a new page if the answer to all questions is no:

- a. Is the latest communication less than a page?
- b. Will all of the endorsement fit on that page?
- c. Is the endorsement sure to be signed without revisions?

2. Use standard 8 ½ x 11 paper for all pages of new page endorsement. Include "Subj" on each page. Every page must be numbered starting with the second page, centered, as indicated in the footer below.

3. Every new page endorsement must include the following:

- a. Repeat the basic memo's SSIC just above the date.
- b. Identify the endorsement-number line.
- c. Repeat the original subject as its own.

4. Use staff symbols when appropriate. The endorser must sign and date the "Thru" line if the endorsement package is forwarded without comment. Approval is implied.

#

Copy: [When substantive content is added, include prior endorsers.]

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State ZIP Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC
Full month dd, yyyy

[Enter Recipient Address]

Dear Sir or Madam:

Start typing here. No indents.

Second paragraph. No indents.

Third paragraph. No indents. Two lines separating between last sentence of the paragraph and closing, centered. Closing is $\frac{1}{4}$ inch right of center.

Sincerely,

[4 lines]

[FI. MI. LAST NAME]

[Enter Title]

U. S. Coast Guard

Enclosure: (1) [Optional Enclosure]

Copy: [Optional Copy]

U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Coast Guard**



Commandant
United States Coast Guard
[Maybe customized to reflect local
unit]

Unit Street Address
Mail Stop XXXX
City, State ZIP Code
Staff Symbol: CG-XXXX
Phone: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Fax: (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: officialemail@uscg.mil

SSIC
January 04, 2030

Company Name
Attn: Mr. Ms. Mx. FI. Last Name or Title
Street Address
City, State ZIP+4

Dear Sir or Madam:

A Coast Guard business letter is used to correspond with non-federal agencies or individuals. The company information including mailing address is placed directly above the salutation. Use "Attn" only if directing the letter to a specific person or office. Coast Guard letters must be on Coast Guard letterhead. Dates on the business letter indicate the full spelling of the month followed by numerical day, and year (comma separates numbers).

The content is left justified and single spaced. Leave a double space between paragraphs. Use times new roman 12-point font and single lines between paragraphs unless it a very short letter. A short letter (2 paragraphs or less, approx. 8 lines) may be double spaced throughout with up to 2-inch side margins for visual appeal. When corresponding, the Coast Guard writer should use plain language, avoid jargon, and spell out abbreviations the first time used. It is appropriate to include a point of contact written into the letter, typically in the in the closing paragraph.

The complimentary closing should be ¼ inch right of center. Use "Sincerely" followed by a comma. Place two lines between the body of the letter and the word sincerely. Place four lines between sincerely and the signature block. Begin signature block on the fifth line.

Sincerely,

[4 lines between]

FI. MI. LAST NAME
Enter Title
U. S. Coast Guard

[2 lines between]

2 Enclosures or
Enclosures: (1) Name it
(2) Name it

Copy: Command Long Title and Address

**[Symbol/Flag Design] [Custom Letterhead for
FLAG/SES/MCPOCG and Others Authorized Stationery]**

[1 line]

[Centered Date Stamp-Optional Placement]

[Full Month dd, yyyy]

Dear Sir or Madam: [Start 2 inches from top on custom stationery,
3 on standard] [1 line]

[Start typing here. Indent each paragraphs throughout the
letter. Typically a minimum of 2 paragraphs.]

[2 lines, more if necessary for visual appeal]

Sincerely,

[ENTER SIGNATURE ALL CAPS]

[Enter Title lowercase]

[2 lines]

Enclosure: (1) [Optional Enclosure]

[1 line between Enclosure and Address, or 2 lines between title and
Optional Address if selected]

[Optional To Address]

[Custom stationery is typically 7 inch width x 8.5 inch length,
margins should be set 2 inches all around when using full size 8 ½
x 11 inch paper and templates]

[Address typically part of customized stationary at top]