

Technical Writing for EIA Documents (NEPA) Training Series White Paper

Documentation of the findings of impact studies is a requirement of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process. In the United States, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality's (CEQ's) implementing regulations, and specific governmental agency regulations, all specify the preparation of compliance documents referred to as environmental impact statements (EISs) or environmental assessments (EAs). The documents are to demonstrate that the environment was considered in decision-making, that a systematic and interdisciplinary approach was used, and that the impact studies were based upon sound science, the use of appropriate methods, and evaluation of the findings in relation to institutional regulations and policies. This written documentation should be based upon the application of technical writing principles, especially because the resultant EISs or EAs may be the only documents on specific proposed actions that are subjected to public review.



This series is designed to facilitate the writing of EAs and EISs. It is designed for both new professionals who need practical information and examples related to planning and preparing compliance documentation, as well as experienced persons who could benefit from refinement of traditional practices.

The training series is comprised of 2 individual modules. Each module includes video instruction and interactive exercises, which are divided into 5 to 10 minute segments to allow for breaks as needed. In addition, each module includes reading assignments from the course manual. And although the current modules are oriented to EIA practice in the United States, generic information is included which can be applicable for any country or development institution.

Key Benefits of E-learning:

- Students can complete the training at their pace and convenience.
- Eliminates costs of travel and cancellation from last-minute work conflicts.
- Trains everyone at one location and future new hires
- Retains your training investment when people leave. The training materials stay with you.

Current Modules within this Series:

- **Principles of Technical Writing Applied to the EIA Process** - This module is comprised of three segments. The first segment addresses several fundamental principles of technical writing and stresses their application regarding the preparation of EIA compliance documents. A key topic is that multiple types of audiences (stakeholder groups) may read entire documents or selected portions thereof; accordingly, attention must be directed to communicating both scientific and policy information to anticipated diverse audiences. The second segment delineates the first two of three phases in the writing process for EAs or EISs – an initial planning phase, typically involving the development of a document outline (contents plan); and a detailed planning phase potentially involving both expansion and potential refinement of the contents plan. The third phase, the actual writing phase, is the subject of the third segment of this module. This segment includes practical suggestions related to organizing relevant information, initiating the writing, developing visual display materials (tables, graphs, maps, etc.), and selection of a referencing system. Finally, it should be noted that focused writing and referencing provides a valid basis for demonstrating that a documented decision process was used.

- **Special Topical Issues Related to Writing and Reviewing EIA Documents** - Five topical issues are addressed. The first one, which is the subject of the first segment of the module, highlights the importance of clearly describing the need for the proposed action, as well as the purposes (objectives) to be accomplished by the preferred alternative. The “needs and purposes” provide the context for both planning considerations and the preparation of EISs or EAs. The second segment includes the second and third topical issues. The second issue addresses the contents of a summary of an EIA compliance document, along with pragmatic means of developing the summary following completion of a draft EIS or EA. This issue is particularly important since the summary is likely to be the most-widely read section (chapter) in a given EIS or EA. The third issue is focused on the challenges and opportunities associated with interdisciplinary team writing efforts. Challenges are related to coordination, timing, and blending the perspectives of the team leader and members. In contrast, opportunities are associated with the preparation of a higher quality document. The third segment includes issues four and five, with the fourth one related to the purposes and processes for conduction of intra-agency reviews of draft EISs and EAs. Finally, the fifth issue highlights differences between a final EIS and a draft EIS, with such differences being largely dependent on the information received from various agencies and publics who participated in the review process.

What’s Included in the Training CDs:

- **Video and Interactive Features:**
These CDs utilize full-motion video of instructors teaching, along with synchronized bullet points. Students will feel as if they are getting a one-on-one teaching seminar. They can move forward or backwards within the module, create bookmarks and repeat any or all segments. In addition, students will be able to interact, answering review questions after segments.
- **Training Manual and Reference CD:** Each module includes a training manual which is utilized throughout the interactive CDs. The Manual includes specific reference materials related to technical (scientific) writing, the preparation of EISs and EAs, and special topics such as addressing the need and purposes for a proposed action, preparing an EIS or EA summary, and changes between draft and final EISs. In addition, a Technical Writing for EIA Documents Reference CD is provided, which includes both bookmarked documents on preparing and reviewing EISs, and pertinent weblinks.
- **Additional Resources:** EIT’s web site provides free papers, reports, presentations and useful web links, along with an online store that offers EIA books.
- **Continual Training Resource:** Many EIA professionals’ work is project-based, so video segments in the modules might be more applicable at different times. Even after completing a module, students can revisit sections with new projects in mind.
- **Experienced Instruction:** This training series was designed by Dr. Larry Canter, lead instructor and Principal, who has 33 years teaching experience at a graduate university. He has taught over hundreds of public and onsite professional-level EIA-related courses.
- **Closed Captioning:** The video segments all have closed captioning
- **Continuing Education Credits - up to 4 hours** (dependent on state or professional board requirements). Each module is designed to qualify for 2 CEU/PDH credits. 4 CEU/PDHs can be earned upon completion of all 2 modules. Please consult your state requirements for more information on self-directed study.

Course Length: 4 - 6 hrs hours.

Training Costs:

1 Training Series CD set (All 2 modules), 1 Training Manual for 1 student 1 Cumulative Effects Assessment Reference CD	\$420
Training manuals and Reference CDs for each additional student	\$75

Key Benefit: When you purchase the CDs, you own the training, so you don't have to pay to send new hires for training and if employees leave, they don't take your investment with them.

How to order: Order the Training CDs online at www.eiatraining.com

Interested in a custom-designed course for your organization?

Each course has the ability to be customized to meet the needs of different organizations or agencies. Agency-specific e-learning courses can be developed, as well as blended learning solutions. For example, students can take a general topics e-learning course and then attend an onsite advanced topics course afterwards. Contact info@eiatraining.com for more information