Publications Clearance
Frequently Asked Questions

1) How much time does it take to clear a manuscript?

If cross-clearance is not required, allow approximately 2 weeks from the time the manuscript is received by the Office of Scientific and Health Communications (OSHC). If cross-clearance is required, allow an additional 4 weeks. Abstracts are generally cleared within EPO in 7 days.

2) When is it appropriate to request "rush clearance"?

Rush clearance should be the exception, not the rule. The authors should always allow enough time to clear their manuscript/abstract. However, an author or supervisor may request rush clearance if there is a true emergency, e.g., if an author comes across an unexpected deadline or was on an emergency assignment. The author and supervisor are responsible for all clerical and logistical aspects of a rush clearance, e.g., copying, walking the manuscript to OSHC.

3) How do I find out the status of my submission?

If you are in Atlanta at either Clifton Road or the Williams Building you can find out the status of your clearance request by opening the EPO Clearance Database in the EPO Share directories by using Access 2000. The database is located on the L:drive at Clifton or the I: drive at Williams under the folder L: Publications Clearance System or I: Publications Clearance System. Open the file called EPO Clearance Database. If you are in the field, you can contact your supervisor to check it for you or you may contact your division or branch clearance contact.

4) What elements should be included in an abstract?

- a clear statement of the question at issue
- a description of the methods
- preliminary results
- conclusions that are based on the results described

5) What does the OADS look for in a manuscript?

- the quality of science
- the defensibility of the conclusions (i.e., are they supported by the results?)
- policy issues (e.g., if the subject matter is controversial, does the science support it? Are the conclusions consistent with CDC policy? If the conclusions contradict generally accepted CDC policy, are the caveats/uncertainties appropriately described?)

- consistency of message (see policy issues—if CDC policy is generally made by another CIO, this often stimulates a need for cross-clearance)
- clarity of writing (is the author's message clear?)

6) But the EPO ADS does not always have the subject matter expertise. How can s/he pass judgment on my work?

It is true that the ADS cannot possibly be an expert on all topics that EPO authors might describe. However, this is also an advantage, because the ADS can objectively evaluate whether the science is clearly communicated and supported, without a bias about what has or should be included. If the manuscript or abstract uses specific methodology such as sophisticated statistics or cost-effectiveness, the ADS might request a consultation or review from other EPO or CDC staff.

7) If the ADS does not approve an item, does this mean it cannot ever be published?

No. Materials not cleared by the ADS are often returned to the author with specific suggestions for how to revise and re-submit.

8) When might the ADS return a document for revision/re-submission versus clearing it with comments?

See the answers to what should be included in an abstract or what is looked for in a manuscript. Basically, if the abstract lacks one of the 4 elements described above (e.g., conclusions are stated, but no results are given), or a manuscript is incomplete or inconsistent (lacking understandable definition of methods or results or conclusions, or containing conclusions that are not supported by the results), a document will often be returned for revision. If the issue is mostly one of scientific clarity, the ADS will usually clear the document, expecting that the author will take ADS and editorial comments into account.

9) What are the criteria for sending a document for cross-clearance?

- The document deals with a controversial, sensitive topic (e.g., bioterrorism)
- Its conclusions are controversial (particularly if relevant to another CIO)
- The subject matter is in the purview of another program
- The data source resides in another program (e.g., behavioral risk factor surveillance system data, or birth certificates)
- There is a co-author from another CIO
- Another CIO has funded the work

10) Does this mean that any abstract or manuscript that deals with specific diseases or program areas will be sent for cross-clearance?

No. If an abstract or paper reports an investigation that seems non-controversial or consistent with generally accepted knowledge (e.g., yet another foodborne outbreak of salmonellosis, with a common vehicle), the paper may be sent to the other CIO for information, rather than for cross-clearance.

11) Is editing required for EPO clearance?

Editing is required for all trainees (e.g., EIS Officers and Prevention Specialists). Editing is not required for other authors, but is generally recommended. In addition, the Division ADS or the EPO ADS may determine that a document requires editing, and send for OSHC review.

12) What materials need clearance by the EPO Webmaster?

Materials to be posted on the Internet must also be cleared by the EPO Webmaster. These include items that will be posted as webpages, and not cleared documents that will simply be made available on the Internet.

13) How do we submit items for clearance by the Webmaster?

Clearance forms for Internet material, including the IRMO development server URL where the edited, scientifically cleared website version resides, should be routed to EPO's Webmaster. In other words, the version sent for Webmaster clearance should incorporate editorial and scientific feedback, and should be a version deemed ready for Internet posting by the author.

14) Are there any documents that do not need clearance?

Articles written as part of a field assignment for state or county newsletters, which reflect local policy or information and do not list one's CDC affiliation, do not require CDC clearance.