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of Transportation
Maritime
Administration

MANUAL OF ORDERS

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EFFECTIVE DATE

August 21, 1989

SUBJECT

CORRESPONDENCE MANAGEMENT

Section 1. Purpose:

This order prescribes policy and procedures for preparing and handling correspondence in accordance with the U.S. Government Correspondence Manual, DOT Order 1325.2B, Department of Transportation Correspondence Manual, and related documents.

Section 2. Procedure for Handling and Routing Correspondence:

2.01 The Correspondence Branch shall:

- 1 Review incoming correspondence addressed to the Maritime Administrator or Deputy Maritime Administrators, determine the action and information offices, prepare a Correspondence Control Sheet for each item of correspondence requiring action (controlled correspondence), enter the applicable suspense date, and route the correspondence to the appropriate offices.
- 2 Route directly to the Maritime Administrator correspondence as specified by the Maritime Administrator, such as from the Secretary or Deputy Secretary of Transportation; Chairperson, Senate Commerce Committee, House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, etc.
- 3 Forward other correspondence to the appropriate action office, even though addressed to the Maritime Administrator or the Deputy Maritime Administrators.
- 4 Make a copy of all significant incoming correspondence for the Deputy Maritime Administrators. A copy may be routed to other concerned offices.

Section 3. Preparation of Correspondence:

3.01 Offices preparing correspondence are responsible for properly preparing, addressing, reviewing, and assembling the correspondence, as prescribed in the U.S. Government Correspondence Manual, Department of Transportation Correspondence Manual, and Maritime Administration Supplements thereto.

3.02 Time Limits for Preparation of Reply. All correspondence shall be answered within the following time limits:

- 1 White House Mail referred directly to the Maritime Administration for reply shall be answered whenever possible within 48 hours of receipt in the Maritime Administration (weekends and holidays excluded). When a reply cannot be sent within 48 hours, an acknowledgment or an interim reply shall be dispatched within that time period and a complete reply sent within 5 workdays thereafter.

- 2 Secretarial Correspondence shall be answered or acknowledged in time to insure delivery to the Executive Secretariat by the due date shown on the Correspondence Control Sheet.
- 3 Congressional Mail, including correspondence from Congressional committees and their staffs; and mail from heads of Departments and Agencies, shall be answered or acknowledged within 3 workdays of receipt in the agency. When an acknowledgment is made, a full reply must follow within 10 workdays if at all possible.
- 4 All other mail shall be answered within 7 workdays of receipt within the Maritime Administration or acknowledged within that time.
- 5 If a final reply cannot be made within 10 workdays after receipt in the Maritime Administration for correspondence described under 3 above, or within 7 workdays for other correspondence under 4 above, a letter shall be sent to the correspondent informing him/her of the status and when a reply may be expected.

3.03 Signature of Correspondence. Correspondence shall be prepared for signature as follows:

- 1 Secretary of Transportation:
 - (1) Letters addressed to the President and the Vice-President of the United States, unless otherwise specified.
 - (2) Letters to heads of Federal Departments or Agencies, Members of Congress, or Congressional Committees on matters of policy.
- 2 Deputy Secretary of Transportation. Letters referred by the Executive Secretariat for preparation of reply for signature of the Deputy Secretary.
- 3 Maritime Administrator or Chairperson, Maritime Subsidy Board:
 - (1) Replies to letters addressed to the President, referred to the Maritime Administration for action.
 - (2) Correspondence addressed to the Secretary of Transportation or the Deputy Secretary and referred to the Maritime Administration for direct reply.
 - (3) Correspondence authorizing an action for which authority has not been redelegated by the Maritime Administrator or Maritime Subsidy Board.

- (4) Correspondence to Members of Congress, Congressional Committees, or their staffs, with the following exceptions:
 - (a) Letters referred by the Executive Secretariat for preparation of reply for signature of the Secretary or Deputy Secretary.
 - (b) Routine Congressional correspondence relating to employment or appointment inquiries and job applications of constituents. These letters shall be prepared for signature of the Director, Office of Personnel.
 - (c) Routine Congressional correspondence relating to admissions requirements and procedures, receipt of nominations, status of nominees, participation in "Academy Days" and admissions recruiting activities, and designations of Academy Information Representatives to participate in Academy-related matters. These letters shall be prepared for signature of the Superintendent, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, or his/her designee; provided that, with respect to nominations:
 - 1 No information shall be divulged to anyone outside the Maritime Administration concerning the nomination record of any individual nominating official, except to the nominating official and his or her staff; and
 - 2 No referral of an applicant shall be made to any nominating official, other than to a Member of Congress from the applicant's home state or a corresponding nominating official in the case of an applicant from a U.S. territory or one of its possessions.
- (5) Correspondence concerning a major policy or program of the Maritime Administration addressed to the head of a Federal department or agency, or his/her full deputy (e.g., Under Secretary of State or the Vice-Chairperson, Interstate Commerce Commission) or an accredited foreign government representative.
- (6) Replies to correspondence addressed to the Maritime Administrator on matters of major importance or policy, including requests for significant action, interpretation of regulations, statutes, policies, or orders (except internal Maritime Administration orders), protests or criticism of agency procedures, policies, or practices.
- (7) Letters to the Comptroller General requesting an opinion or advice on the use of Government funds; except:
 - (a) Comptroller General's determinations requested by authorized certifying officers.
 - (b) Submissions of questions to the Comptroller General by contracting officials for advance decisions when prompt resolution of questions is necessary prior to award of a public contract.

4 Deputy Maritime Administrators:

- (1) Correspondence involving the exercise of an authority delegated to the Deputy Maritime Administrators and not redelegated to another official.
- (2) Correspondence affecting major activities or operations of the Maritime Administration. These generally involve functions of more than one office, where authority had not been specifically redelegated.

5 Secretary, Maritime Administration/ Maritime Subsidy Board - Correspondence relating to official actions taken by the Maritime Administration, i.e., Maritime Administrator, Maritime Subsidy Board, Deputy Maritime Administrators, or Director, National Shipping Authority, unless otherwise specified.

6 Director, National Shipping Authority - Correspondence relating to the activities of the National Shipping Authority, other than specified in section 3.03 5 above, shall be prepared for the signature of the Director, National Shipping Authority, By: Deputy Maritime Administrator; or if authority has been redelegated in section 2 of Maritime Administrative Order 70-1, By: Associate Administrator for Shipbuilding and Ship Operations, or if authority has been redelegated in section 2 of Maritime Administrative Order 80-1, By: Associate Administrator for Marketing, as applicable.

7 Associate Administrators - Correspondence involving the exercise of delegated authority and not redelegated to any other official.

8 Personnel Officer - Correspondence on personnel matters (except those relating to a type specified in the above subsections); employment applications; and inquiries relating to applicable laws, regulations, policies and procedures on personnel matters.

9 Office Directors or Staff Officials:

- (1) All other correspondence relating to their functional responsibility unless a subordinate official has been authorized to sign the correspondence in accordance with section 3.04 below.
- (2) Acknowledgments of correspondence (except correspondence to Members of Congress, Congressional Committees, or their staffs) on which a complete reply will be prepared at a later date for the signature of the Maritime Administrator or the Deputy Maritime Administrators.

3.04 Delegation of Signing Authority. Associate Administrators, Office Directors, and other officials shall delegate to subordinate officials their signing authority to the maximum extent possible consistent with level of responsibility assigned to them.

3.05 Special Instructions. The following instructions shall be followed by all offices preparing correspondence:

- 1 Letters referred by Members of Congress. When a reply is made directly to a constituent's letter referred to the agency by a Member of Congress, the Member's letter shall be acknowledged and a letterhead copy of the reply (including all enclosures) to the constituent shall be enclosed.
- 2 Explanation of Referral to Other Officials. Replies to correspondence addressed to the Secretary of Transportation, the Maritime Administrator, or other top officials prepared for other than the addressee's signature shall contain a statement in the first paragraph that the letter is being written at the request of the addressee. Correspondence prepared for the signature of a higher echelon official than the addressee shall contain an appropriate introductory paragraph as well.
- 3 Correspondence Referred Outside the Agency. Correspondence not pertaining to the Maritime Administration shall be immediately acknowledged and referred to the proper agency with a copy of the acknowledgment. When only part of a letter concerns the Maritime Administration, this fact should be stated in the reply and the inquiry referred to the appropriate agency for reply.

3.06 Memoranda of Record for the Files. These may be prepared under the following circumstances and filed in the originating office's official files:

- 1 Whenever considered appropriate in the proper discharge of the writer's responsibilities. A copy shall be supplied to the writer's Office Director who shall determine any other distribution he/she considers appropriate.
- 2 To summarize salient points of discussions or meetings with industry representatives, whether made under the writer's delegated authority or referred to higher authority for approval.

Section 4. Clearance, Review, and Routing of Outgoing Correspondence:

4.01 Clearance of Correspondence. Form MA-71, Concurrence Record, for routine correspondence, and Form MA-71A for special or urgent correspondence, shall be prepared by the originating office for routing and clearance of correspondence with other offices whose functions or operations are affected. Review and clearance shall be limited to officials who can contribute to the accuracy and quality of the correspondence. If a reviewing official does not concur, he/she shall try to reach agreement with the originating office and have the changes made accordingly. If agreement cannot be reached, he/she may prepare and attach a memorandum to the signer giving the reasons for non-concurrence. In addition, the following categories of correspondence shall be routed for clearance by:

- 1 The Deputy Maritime Administrators and the appropriate Associate Administrator--Correspondence prepared for the signature of, or addressed to, the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, or an Assistant Secretary of Transportation; a Secretarial officer of any Federal department or agency; an accredited foreign government representative; the Maritime Administrator; or the Chairperson of the Maritime Subsidy Board.
- 2 The Office of the Chief Counsel:
 - (1) Correspondence to the Comptroller General; and
 - (2) Congressional correspondence, (i.e., correspondence addressed to Members of Congress, Congressional committees, or their staffs) with the following exceptions:
 - (a) Acknowledgments of a routine nature need not be cleared.
 - (b) In cases where a standard letter is to be used to answer Congressional correspondence, only the first of such letters need be routed through the Office of the Chief Counsel for clearance.
 - (c) Once the Office of Chief Counsel has cleared and the Maritime Administrator has signed the initial standard letter, all subsequent identical letters need not be routed through the Office of the Chief Counsel. The Form MA-71 (Concurrence Record) transmitting the letters should be noted to the effect that the Office of the Chief Counsel previously had reviewed and cleared the reply. However, each time the standard letter is used, a completed copy shall be sent to the Office of the Chief Counsel after signature.
 - (d) In cases where any change is made to the content of a standard reply, the first of such responses should be routed through the Office of the Chief Counsel for clearance.
- 3 The Secretary, Maritime Subsidy Board--All correspondence to officials outside the Maritime Administration prepared for the signature of the Chairperson of the Board, stating the Board's position on any pending or completed action.

4.02 Routing of Signed Correspondence. After signature, the following correspondence shall be routed through the Correspondence Branch, Office of Management Services:

- 1 Correspondence prepared for signature of the Secretary, the Deputy Secretary, or an Assistant Secretary of Transportation.
- 2 Correspondence signed by the Maritime Administrator, the Chairperson of the Maritime Subsidy Board, or the Deputy Maritime Administrators.

Section 5. Control, Follow-Up, and Reporting:

5.01 The Correspondence Branch shall be responsible for maintaining a follow-up for Congressional mail, White House mail, and other controlled correspondence on which there is a suspense date to insure that the time limits specified in section 3.02 above are met.

5.02 Copies of the Correspondence Control Sheet, prepared in this branch and attached to all controlled correspondence, shall be used by action offices for control purposes. Action offices shall also use the Correspondence Control Sheet for any other important correspondence which they deem necessary for internal control and follow-up. The control record shall be maintained in only one place within the action office for any one piece of correspondence.

5.03 Upon reply to controlled correspondence, the action office shall return a copy of the Correspondence Control Sheet to the Correspondence Branch, noting the name of the signer and the date of the reply. When correspondence is prepared for signature outside the action office, the signer's office shall transmit the completed Correspondence Control Sheet to the Correspondence Branch. If a letter does not require a written reply, a copy of the Correspondence Control Sheet signed by an Office Director or his/her designee should be returned immediately to the Correspondence Branch in order for that item to be removed from the control system.

5.04 When correspondence has not been answered within prescribed time limits, the Chief, Correspondence Branch, shall contact action offices on the established due date as a reminder and as frequently as necessary thereafter.

5.05 The Correspondence Branch shall maintain a database containing relevant information from each Correspondence Control Sheet for all open items. A separate database for completed items transferred from the control system shall be maintained for an appropriate period. Reports shall be provided to the Office of the Maritime Administrator, as required.

Section 6. Field Procedures:

The Region Directors and the Superintendent, U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, shall be responsible for establishing correspondence procedures within their respective areas, in conformance with the signature authorities and other principles set forth in this order.



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Deputy Maritime Administrator