Federal Register Document Drafting Handbook

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Chapter 5: Can I Submit a Computer File?

Notes: In this chapter, "we," "our," or "OFR" refer to the Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and "you" or "your" refer to federal agencies that prepare documents for publication in the *Federal Register.*

Use the examples in this chapter as models for style, not content. Although many of these examples are single-spaced, you must double-space your document.

5.1 Can I submit a computer file for publication in the *Federal Register?*

You should submit a computer file as an electronic original document (digitally authenticated) or as an electronic certified copy on disk or CD.

Electronic originals must be digitally signed, and can be submitted via e-mail or the web. Submitting an electronic original eliminates the need for paper copies. For more information, *see section 5.3.*

Electronic certified copies, submitted on disk (CD, floppy diskette), accompany a paper original and certified paper copies. For more information, *see section 5.4.*

*Note***:** For continuity of operations purposes, including pandemic readiness, agencies should implement our currently available digital signature technology for *Federal Register* documents. The Federal Register system is a National Essential Function, which must be sustained under all conditions. Agencies should make digitally signed *Federal Register* documents a part of their daily business process to satisfy Presidential continuity directives (NSPD-51/HSPD-20).

We will add at least one extra day to the publication schedule for documents submitted in paper-only form, to allow time for conversion to electronic form. Paper-only submissions qualify as technical impediments under 1 CFR 17.7 and will be processed under the deferred publication schedule. Conforming documents, submitted in paper with a certified copy on disk or sent as a digitally signed document, will continue to be published on the regular three day schedule.

5.2 What are the requirements for submitting computer files?

Document drafting guidelines.

Follow the drafting guidelines in Chapter 1, 2, or 3 of this handbook when you draft any *Federal Register* document, whether you plan to submit it on paper or as a computer file.

File format.

OFR accepts electronic originals or electronic certified copies in MS-Word format. We will not erase any hidden data or "scrub" your documents before they are displayed online for public inspection. Your agency is responsible for any underlying metadata in your documents before and after they arrive at the Office of the Federal Register.

Make sure that your documents do not have any comments or remaining "tracked" changes left in them from the agency editing process. Also, you must remove or disable any macros. We will not accept macro-enabled documents or documents with comments or remaining tracked changes for publication.

> *MS-Word.* MS-Word is the word processing application you should use to create your document file, prepared according to your agency's requirements, with no GPO typesetting codes. The OFR can process files created from the 2003, 2007, and 2010 editions of MS-Word. If you have a newer version of MS-Word, contact us to see if we can accept it.

> *Metadata.* Metadata is hidden information embedded in an MS-Word document and can include personal information about the author of the document.

Macros. Macros are sets of computer instructions that will automatically run in MS-Word, usually used to generate or format content.

Billing code.

For detailed information about billing codes, *see section 1.3, 2.3, or 3.3 of this handbook.* To assist GPO in billing your agency correctly, change the final letter of the billing code to reflect the document's file format. For MS-Word, use "P."

Example 5.1: Billing code for electronic documents.
BILLING CODE 4000-01-P

5.3 What are the specific requirements for electronic originals?

You may submit electronic original documents via e-mail or the web. These must be signed with a medium assurance level digital signature certificate, cross-certified by the Federal Bridge Certification Authority. Because this electronic file is the original document, submitting in this manner eliminates the need for paper copies.

You must agree to comply with OFR's procedures for submitting electronic originals and your agency must acquire appropriate digital signature certificates. For up-to-date information, contact OFR's Technical Services Staff at (202) 741-6020.

OFR only accepts MS-Word files as digitally signed originals.

Graphics, appendices, and annexes

If your document contains graphics, appendices, or annexes, include them in the document where they should appear in print. Do not send them as separate files in addition to your text.

5.4 What are the specific requirements for certified electronic copies?

If you submit a signed paper original and two certified paper copies, you may include a certified electronic copy on CD-ROM or floppy diskette. Submitting this certified electronic copy may reduce your printing costs and promote accuracy.

Certified electronic copies must follow these requirements:

Certification letter.

The certified electronic copy on disk should be saved from the same file used to print the signed paper original. Include a certification letter certifying that the electronic copy on disk is an identical version of the enclosed paper original. The Certifying Officer, Liaison Officer, or signer of the document may sign this letter. *(See Appendix A for a model letter.)*

Note: Certifying a disk as a true copy is a formal legal attestation. Certifiers must take extraordinary care to ensure that the copy on disk is exactly the same as the signed paper original. The certified copy is used as evidentiary material, both for Public Inspection and in the published edition of the *Federal Register*, and is relied upon by the regulated public. It will stand as evidence of your agency's action, unless your agency discovers and corrects discrepancies in a timely manner. If OFR finds any discrepancies in the certified disk copy prior to publication, we may immediately remove the document from production stream, and issue notice of the agency error if the document has been placed on public inspection.

Type of disk.

CD-ROM.

OFR accepts certified electronic copies on CD-ROM and similar optical disk formats. Finalize the CD so it can be read without proprietary software.

High Density 3.5 Diskettes.

OFR accepts certified electronic copies on high density (HD), 3.5 inch diskettes, formatted for PC. We cannot accept double density (DD) diskettes. Use new or reformatted diskettes to ensure that we receive a readable diskette with no extra files. Scan the diskette to ensure that it is virus-free.

OFR does not accept any other type of disk, including flash drives and SD cards.

Disk Preparation.

If the document spans two or more files, merge these as a single file, in sequence to match the paper original. If files are too large to fit on floppy diskette, submit it on CD-ROM.

Submit only one document per disk. Send a separate disk and include a separate certification letter for each document.

The certified electronic copy must be the only file on the disk. Delete drafts, supporting documents, and any other files before you send the disk to OFR.

Do not submit password protected or encrypted files or files with track-changes or comments.

Do not submit files with metadata.

Do not submit macro-enabled files.

Disk Labeling.

Include the following information on the label of the disk:

> Name of your agency.
>
> Name of the file on the disk.
>
> File format: MS-Word.

Subject heading, CFR citation, or agency docket number, tying it to the paper document.

5.5 How do I make changes to an electronic submission?

To correct any document, you must follow the procedures in *section 4.2.* The following requirements also apply to documents accompanied by disk submissions.

If the changes are extensive, we may require you to submit a new original document, a new certified electronic copy, and a new certification letter, or we may return your submission to you for correction and resubmission.

5.6 Checklist for Electronic Submissions

✓ Submit only one file per disk.

✓ Use a CD-ROM or High Density 3.5" diskette.

✓ If your document contains graphics, appendices, or annexes, include them in the document where they should appear in print. Do not send them as separate files in addition to your text.

✓ Do not submit a "read only" file.

✓ Do not submit a macro-enabled file.

✓ When drafting your document do not use the automatic formatting features of your word-processing program.

✓ Accept all tracked changes before submitting the electronic file.

✓ Make sure there are no comments in the file before submitting it.

✓ Take the necessary precautions regarding the metadata before submitting the file.