This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Real-time Translation (C.A.R.T.) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. It is NOT under any circumstances an official transcript nor admissible evidence.

 >>: Recording in progress.

 MR. DICKENS: Well, hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us at this Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities Accessibility and Disability Policy Webinar series. This topic today is regarding using plain language. We've invited two speakers from an organization to present about this topic.

First we have Robin Berry who's with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, TCEQ; and then we have Vanessa Theel from SUMM AI. With the Governor's committee on people with disabilities, which we -- we serve our -- one of our mission statements are we want to be able to improve opportunities for people with disabilities to be able to enjoy a full [INAUDIBLE] accessibility in their lives. We live independently productive lives and to be able to determine their own -- some of the services we provide: We have opportunities to make recommendations for change in policy for people with disabilities and also a program with area accessibility communication, education, emergency preparedness, health and wellness, housing, transportation, and workforce, as well as criminal justice, which we -- which we've recently added and the committee also supports networking of people with disabilities in their location area within government and we get awards to those who promote awareness about people with disabilities and support accommodations with those with disabilities in regards to legal issues.

Now, we're ready to turn it over to Robin. Take it away.

 MS. BERRY: Thank you, Matthew, for such an introduction; and what a world of things that you do. I'm so grateful to be included today. I'm thrilled that this many people are interested in plain language. We have almost 200 people joining us today. That's pretty exciting.

So, I'm Robin Berry and I am publishing -- a publishing coordinator -- not the sole but a publishing coordinator at TCEQ, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. I've been teaching plain language classes there for 10 years in October.

Now, we require two three-hour sessions for all staff who write for the web at TCEQ. So, that covers almost any type of writing: Publications, even banners and forms and -- and, of course, web pages because most of this type of content will end up there.

Our participants do exercises in class to practice, but today we're just going to offer you an introduction and some examples to get you started. And then at the end of my presentation I'll also provide you with some other resources because I know you're going to want to learn more.

So, what is plain language? I really like to call it "clear communication" because it involves more than just language. But language that is clear to one set of readers may not necessarily be to others.

But because plain language is the nationally recognized term, we'll stick with that today and be consistent.

But what is that definition?

Well, plain language, first and foremost, helps your reader. It helps your audience. It helps them find what they need, understand what they find the first time they read it -- that's important -- and use it to accomplish a task.

Let's face it: People come to government web pages for information not for entertainment.

But why should you care? Oops. Sorry. We -- we went too far ahead here.

Let's back up one more. There we go.

So, if you embrace plain language principles -- there we go -- [CHUCKLING] so, now we're going to help you. If you embrace these principles and put them into play, you can have more pleasing interactions with your customers.

You won't take so many calls to help them find what they need or explain it when they do find it, and that can improve your efficiency as you may then have more time to apply your expertise in other important endeavors. And you can improve the effectiveness of your processes and requirements. If customers understand what we require of them, they're more likely to comply and then last, it's easier to translate into another language.

Well, let's see if I can move this without jumping too fast.

There we go.

So, what does your audience need?

Ask yourself some questions about who your audience is. Why are they coming to your content, whether it's a web page or if they're reading a letter that you've sent them?

What do they need to do?

Why do they need to come to you?

Why do they need your information? And is it possible that you have a couple of different types of audiences like the public and the regulated community?

These are all important questions to know before you start laying out your content.

So, I don't know if you're aware of this. Actually, people at TCEQ have told me that they're -- their audience is engineers or other professionals but 50% of Americans lack literacy proficiency and they read below a sixth grade level. Now, that's not because your customers aren't educated. Most of us read three to five grade levels behind the last year of school completed but it's because we're distracted by life and that affects our reading ability.

Do you often feel rushed or tired or like you're trying to juggle too many things at once? So, how do we cope? Well, one of the things we do is we skim content. We only read about 20% of what we're presented, especially on a web page. So, how do you do it? Well, here are five tips for incorporating plain language:

That number one takeaway, focus on your reader and the tasks they need to complete.

Number two, substitute common words for formal words like "about" instead of "regarding."

Number three, speak directly to the person who's reading your content by using pronouns like "you," "your," and "we," and "it."

Number four, include only one thought per sentence and use active words like "submit"" instead of "submission"

And last, number five, use headings, bulleted lists, and lots of white space to make your content seem easy to read.

Now, we're not asking you to write on a fifth grade level because a word that a reader needs to understand to accomplish their task is the right word, but even the expert user wants to just grab and go. So, show them the right stuff.

Let's say your reader submits a renewable application every year. So, put that at the top of whatever your media is, labeling it using key words, the words they would use for it.

If they need to find out if they qualify, then put that information first and then the application. And if they then need more details, you can add that later, but make it easy for those who already know what they need.

And only include what they do need. Cut the unnecessary content like the history of the program or the authorizing legislation for regulations or at least move that type of information down the page or offload it as a footnote or to some other less important location.

We actually saw that yesterday in our publishing coordinators' meeting. Someone had provided a big, long list of the authorizing legislation for a particular regulation and there were about five laws that were involved and that was all at the very beginning before the reader even got to the content and, so, we offloaded that important information into a footnote and now the reader can read it more easily.

So, what about other unnecessary content?

Avoid jargon or acronyms now we can use them among ourselves but don't teach them to your customer.

If you're referring to on-site sewage facilities as OSSF's, on the first instance use the whole term "on-site sewage facility" and then after that you can just use the word "facility."

Limit noun chains.

So, write this down: New web page procedures.

New web page procedures.

Are we referring to new procedures for web pages or procedures for new web pages?

That also actually happened.

If we insert "for" in the right place, then we know. So, sometimes we actually need to add words.

And then recall that one tip for implementing plain language about using pronouns, so, if you see a repeated term like water quality permit, substitute the pronoun "it" to avoid repetition.

See how all these practices overlap?

So, let's consider some examples now because that's where the real easy or hard part comes in is

actually applying what we've just talked about.

So, this statement is wordy, it's formal, and it's kind of not reader focused.

In order to demonstrate sufficient teaching experience, classroom instructors must have at least 60 hours of classroom instructional experience.

Now, we could shorten it by leaving off "in order" because those are extra words that we really don't even need. We could just say "to demonstrate" but then we have that formal word "demonstrate." So, we could sub in the word "to 'show' sufficient teaching experience."

But even at that we're repeating the word "experience" and "classroom" twice. We had "experience" in that first line and in the third line; and we've said "classroom" twice in the second line and then isn't it kind of repetitive to tell them that they must have experience to show that they do?

So, let's see how we can improve on it.

"Instructors must have at least 60 hours of in-class teaching experience."

So, we eliminated that first part, leaving out our stuff; and we changed to "in-class" to specify that we do want someone who has been in the classroom rather than hosting a webinar like this and, thus, we shortened the sentence.

And then recall that we said you can also use common words instead of formal ones. When there was a flood in Houston, it was a crisis but we don't need to say that the flood event was a crisis situation and we certainly hope they made more than a cleanup effort.

So, notice how we can just eliminate those extra empty words.

Bonus tip: When you see a noun ending in "ion" like "registration," there's a verb hiding there. So, switch to active language and write "register" instead.

Write directly to your customer. We can help you determine instead of "determination" or make a determination. There's that other "ion" ending word.

We see "in accordance with" at our agency a lot to reference rules. You can substitute "under" or put the rule citation in parentheses at the end of the paren -- at the end of the passage.

And then give them information about the requirements for the permit instead of "regarding."

Now, let's look at some more examples.

So, if you incorporate pronouns in your writing, it will sound friendly; and it will make it more clear who should act.

Loan applications will be reviewed to insure that procedures have been followed.

So, we're kind of focusing on the thing there, the loan applications. And the "p" words or the sort of red flag words there are "be" and "been."

So, anytime you see those words, you know that you have been writing in passive voice instead of active.

So, instead, let's focus on the reader and use active voice instead.

So, we've used pronouns and we've said "we will review your loan application."

So, we've personalized it, we've made it clear who's going to be acting, and we've given the reader hope that their loan will be approved.

That other stuff about procedures, that's on us. That's -- that's just our process.

If they didn't give us enough information on their application, we can ask for it. We don't need to tell them that that's why we're going to review them.

Now, staffers had told me that this passive to active voice thing is one of the hardest features. So, let's look at some more examples of that. So, looking for those red flag words, our first example: The entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew.

So, "was" is a form of the word "be." Sorry about the grammar lesson, y'all. Sometimes it's necessary.

Instructions will be mailed. Well, that one's easy. We see the word "be."

This permit shall be kept on file for 6 months.

Where are we going to find that permit? We don't really know, do we?

So, let's shift to active voice instead.

We know that the crew is the actor because we saw it at the end of that first sentence, "the entire stretch of highway was paved by the crew." So, let's just flip it around. "The crew paved the entire stretch of highway."

Now, for the second one, "instructions will be mailed," we don't really know who's mailing the instructions; but we can assume that someone is going to receive those instructions in the mail. Maybe it's the operator. Maybe it's you, the reader. So, we can just say, "you will receive instructions in the mail."

And then last, "keep this permit on file at your facility for 6 months." Notice how we've inserted some words there.

We've given them a little bit more information because previously we didn't know where they were going to be kept. So, we've inserted "at your facility."

And then there's an implied pronoun in "keep." So, you keep this permit.

Easy-peasy, right?

So, I said earlier that plain language is more than just words; and it's more than just sentence structure. Your reader needs to be able to find the information. So, we need to make it seem easy to read also; and headings help them scan for key words.

So, make your headings informative and consistent in format.

Try to use only about three sentences to a paragraph and -- and write short paragraphs. That creates white space.

Incorporate bulleted lists or comparable things. So, for instance, you can list all nouns or all active phrases -- and only about seven because the brain can't really handle more than that.

Bulleted lists also avoid extra words that you would need if you were writing in full sentences -- and long ones with commas -- and they also add white space. So, they seem easy to read.

Now, these three types of headings -- question, statement, and topic -- illustrate the different

types that you can use -- and I mentioned a second ago that it would be wise to use the same types of headings in your content. Notice how the extra words at the beginning of that question heading, though, may obscure the key words. So, "public notice" is probably the thing that the customer is most interested in.

And then if we write it as a statement, well, maybe they do or don't need to publish one. So, sometimes that topic heading will be your most concise and most clear. So, just "public notice," has those key words that your readers need.

So, does this seem easy to read?

[CHUCKLING]

It's just a great, gray wall of text.

"When a new sensitive feature is discovered, it must be reported to TCEQ. Protection of the feature can be accomplished by removing the sediment from the area adjacent to the feature without disturbing the feature and installing a rock berm or other appropriate BMP around the feature to control and filter any potential flows into the feature. Work must be stopped after protection for the feature is installed."

See how many plain languages overlap here, like repetition? Did we say the word "feature" a few times?

Could we use pronouns there instead and -- and what about active verbs, like remember that word -- words that end in "ion" like the word "protection"?

Let's see how we can improve on this.

Oh, and do you know what BMP stands for? There's an example of jargon.

So, in our improved version we started out with an active verb, "report any new sensitive feature to TCEQ."

And that's instead of "must be recorded." So, we've moved from passive to active and then we've implied the pronoun "you."

We subbed in "protect." So, "protect it with the following steps." Notice we used a pronoun, "it" to take the place of "feature."

And as we move along, we see that we have added a bulleted list. So, there's an example of using structure -- we're talking about structure in this water quality protection -- but we're also talking about structure in our sentences and in our content and, so, we instead went from that long paragraph into a bulleted list of three actions:

"Remove the sediment from the adjacent area, taking care to not disturb the feature."

"Install a rock berm or other appropriate structure around it, controlling and filtering any potential flows into it."

"Stop work after installing the protecting structure."

So, doesn't that seem easier to read as well as it actually is easier to read?

Well, I told you that this was merely an introduction in examples and, so, that was our down and dirty introduction to plain language.

These links, however, provide additional training opportunities because I know you're going to want more practice.

So, first up we have the essentials of plain language by Katherine Spivey. It's about an hour long, a little bit more in detail than what we just covered and on that link I've given you the URL's here. You can click on that and search for plain language and that presentation will come up.

And then next up is another Katherine Spivey. This one is a 3-hour online workshop, plain language basics and then next an article by the famous and renowned Nielsen Norman Group, "plain language is for everyone, even experts" and last, is a web page about how to get started implementing plain language at your organization.

So, I hope we've piqued your curiosity and offered a few helpful tips about how to get started and I thank you so much for participating. I'm going to turn you back over to Matthew.

MS. THEEL: Perfect. Maybe, Robin, I can jump in real quick because there are some questions in the Q and A that I think might be relevant for everyone here. So, I'm going to relay them to you.

MS. BERRY: Thank you.

MS. THEEL: So, one of the participants asked that it seems like a lot of the examples reduced lengthy words and legal language. Do you have any tips to help justify these changes to legal folks who are trying to prevent every potential problem and misstep?

MS. BERRY: That's such a great question. I refer often to an expert Bryan Garner who talks about things like "shall" in legal lingo and that word has proven to be vague and unclear even legally. So, oftentimes including that legal language is off-putting for your reader and, yes, sometimes your readers need to know what the rules are and in that case we do often suggest that you refer them to, for instance, the Secretary of State's Web site if they feel like they need to read all of the details about the rules but what we try to do is break it down so that it's easier to understand for everyone and then if they need more information, we refer them to the legal stuff.

MS. THEEL: Uh-huh.

MS. BERRY: Hope that helps.

MS. THEEL: Awesome. Then one more question, very specific one, whether the word "adjacent" is too complicated.

MS. BERRY: No.

MS. THEEL: Okay.

MS. THEEL: And then just some thanks for your presentation that [TALKING OVER EACH OTHER INAUDIBLY] very helpful and they want to learn more.

MS. BERRY: Wonderful. Thank you.

MS. THEEL: Then I guess it's my turn talk about --

MR. DICKENS: That's really good information because we have to learn a lot and reading this, I've learned a lot. It's made a big difference in how you read -- if reading is hard compared to making it a little bit more simple. So, it really made a big impact. So, thank you so much for sharing that information. So, we're ready to turn it over to Vanessa and she'll talk about her

information. Take it away.

 MS. THEEL: Perfect.

Yes. Thank you so much. I'll try to get the technical things running. Give me one second.

And another one, yes, perfect. So, hi, everyone. I'm Vanessa. I'm from a German start-up called SUMM AI. And we're building the... we say "Google Translate" for plain language. So, what I'm going to talk about is just a little bit about myself and what we do and why we do what we do but then I want to give you some insights into what technological advancements can maybe help with creating more text in plain language and help take some of the effort that it takes away but also I want to discuss with you what are the limitations of technology.

So, maybe let's get started with who I am or who we are. So, you can see a picture of my team. We are often introduced as the AI -- so, artificial intelligence -- rock stars from the tech -- Technical University of Munich and that's exactly who we are. We are a strong team of people who want to use their technical knowledge for something good.

We have the mission to make the world understandable and this mission is actually a very personal one since it comes from the close family circle of my cofounder Flora. You can see her in the bottom in the middle.

We have an unofficial team member -- and that's Flora's aunt. Flora's aunt has a slight physical disability and couldn't go to school as long or as intense as she might otherwise could have. She's superinterested in politics. She surfs the web, but when it comes to very long sentences and complex structures, she doesn't get all of the information she wants and has a lot of questions.

So, exactly what we just heard from Robin, information that is a lot in not a nicely structured way which unfortunately we still see most of the time, especially on the Internet.

And I also brought the same statistics actually. So, 40 -- 54% of adults in the U.S. read below a sixth grade level because I think this is such a -- such a meaningful number, right? More than half of the population.

And Robin also said this is what we all can -- what we all experience, right? Even if we are a great expert who doesn't appreciate it being fed to you in nice pieces that it's just easy to read through, right?

So, we have asked ourselves what's the problem? Why are there not more texts in plain language out there yet?

So this is the example I brought from Germany at least. I'm excited to hear your thoughts whether it's the same in the U.S. and so in Germany or in the EU at least if you create text in plain language, this is done manually.

So, you have people who have experience with creating plain language who know the audience who know the rules on how to be as precise and simple as possible.

But this manual work, it's very tedious. It's also very slow; and it's kind of expensive, right, because you need to have all of these people who take the time to create a plain version of the complicated text. And this is where we come in -- or where we try to come in -- with what I said in the beginning, our Google translate for plain language.

So, I also brought the example that Robin took in her last example.

So, basically what you do is you input a complex text on the left, you click "translate" on the bottom, and then you get the plain version out on the right in just a few seconds. This is not perfect. This is also one of the limitations that I want to jump into with you guys but this can be a great start in order to take away the -- the first step of going into the simplification task.

You don't have this white wall in front of you of, okay, where -- where do I even start if I have a complicated text? But you have it broken down in short sentences, only one thing happening each sentence with a more active and easy vocabulary.

I'm going to go ahead and jump into one of the limitations already because we see it here and I want to grab out the last sentence in our plain language draft. It says "then you can work again" and this is not true.

If you go back to the left, it says "then you cannot go back to work again."

So, just a little... thing that we can also jump in right now that we will see later again and this is something that was created by an AI. So, this -- there is no human intelligence in there anywhere. So, you need to be very, very careful on how you handle this draft; but if you handle in a good way, it can be a great start to help you in the process. Okay. So, this is just what we do or what we're trying to do.

Now what I want to give you is a glimpse into what is artificial intelligence, how can artificial intelligence maybe help in creating more plain language, give you a little bit of the history of artificial intelligence with text and language, and how far that has evolved in the past years where we stand right now and what the limitations are, maybe what an outlook into the future can be.

So, first I want to give you a short introduction about what actually is artificial intelligence.

So, human beings can think and learn for themselves and a human being can solve problems. That's why we say a human being is intelligent.

Many people are working on artificial intelligence today and artificial intelligence are basically just computer programs. So, it's an algorithm that can do something.

And it's called artificial intelligence because the computer programs are supposed to work almost like a human. That means they are supposed to learn, they are supposed to become better, and they should to be able to solve problems; and you can teach a computer to do that. For example, in our case a computer can learn to understand text. That is one area of artificial intelligence and it's called natural language processing, short, NLP. So, the computer can read text; it can find problems in the text; and it can make the text better.

So, this means a computer can learn to understand context. And what do I mean by "context"? For this I brought an example here. On both sides you can see a bat.

On the left, you can see a bat as an animal. On the right, you can see a bat -- so, a thing that you use to play baseball. So, if you just see the word written, it looks exactly the same; but depending on what context the word is used in, it means two completely different things and this is something that you can teach a program and this is something that you can do with artificial intelligence.

So, let me start in 2013 and I brought a little graphic with me. Bear with me. I'm trying to do

this as high-level as I can. So, this was the first milestone in working with computer programs and text. It was called word2vec; and it's basically a technique for NLP that we just discussed and it's an algorithm that learns associations between words. How does it do it? It does it with the help of a large amount of text.

Once the algorithm has learned, it can recognize similar words. So, what you could see here is you see, for example, on the left and you can see the word "king" and the word "queen" and behind it you can see the word "man" and the word "woman"; and what you can see is that the distance from "king "to "queen" is exactly the distance from "man" to "woman." So, you can see that the relationship between "king" and "queen" is the same relationship as between "man" and "woman." Same for "walking" and "walked" and "swimming" and "swam."

Here this direction doesn't mean male or female but it means now or the past.

There's also distances between, for example, countries and cities and this is how you can have words in relation to each other.

If we go back to the "bat" problem, we see that this is good enough but there will be only one point for bat, right? Which one is it? Is it the animal or is it the baseball bat?

So, this is something that still doesn't solve our problem of context.

Let me move over to 2017. And this is where I would say the magic happened. In 2017 there was something introduced called the attention mechanism which revolutionized how artificial intelligence works. And what I brought is an example for translation. This is from German to English and, so, if anyone here knows German, you can read the bottom, so the black part, as well. For everyone else, just focus on the English one. So, the red and the green. And translation is a very great example to show you that word-for-word doesn't work. Again, we need the context, right? Because if I go from German to English, and I just go word by word, the sentence would be "can you me help the sentence to translate," which is not good English.

However, if I look at the bottom, I can see that in German the words at the end also refer to the English words at the front. So, in order to do a good translation, again, I need context. So, I can't only look at one word. I need to look at the words around it; and I can't do this word by word or in a sequence but I have to do it all together.

And this is basically what "attention" does as the mechanism, it gives attention to a whole sentence or even a whole paragraph when trying to do a task and not go through it sequence by sequence.

Before 2017 most AI models for text were trained using so-called supervised learning. This means they were trained for a very particular task, for example, translating words for words, answering questions.

So, that meant that they could only be used for this specific task.

Now, what we see with, for example, chat GPT is so-called large language models which build on this attention mechanism.

As an example of large language models -- there are many different types -- I brought OpenAI's GPT and what you can see in this graphic is the revolution of the different GPT models. So, it started out with GPT1. It moved over to GPT2 in 2019. Then it moved over to GPT3 and then now, GPT4.

And what you can see on the left is the amount of parameters that these models have. This kind of means the amount of complexity. For example, GPT3 has a hundred and seventy five billion parameters -- parameters in it.

And that's approximately twice as many neurons as a human brain has.

So, this means the amount of calculations that are being done is kind of twice as much as a human brain can do when propagating something through your brain.

And what you can see is that already GPT3 was quite good. And -- but when it came to solving human tasks, for example, writing the bar exam, it wasn't completely bad but it was in the lowest 10% when compared to human people taking this test.

Now, moving over just a few years to the current version, GPT4, we can see that now, compared to a human, the AI lands in the top 10% of people taking the bar exam.

So, what we see is a very steep increase. Though, what we also see is, okay, there is kind of a limit, right? Because how much better can you get? So, this is something that I think is a very, very interesting point in time that we're at right now. We've seen this amazing increase in ability of an AI and now we're there and we need to think about first, how are we going to use this that we have now? How can we include this to make our lives better? But also have it in a good way and not have it go rampant -- rampaging around; but, also, what does the future bring? Where can this even go?

So, the most important problem I think is how can you be sure that these technologies are behaving correctly? And it's very difficult to do this.

So, what we believe it's very important to have human values and rules around it.

So, for example, in our tool, we don't only use an AI. We try to have rule based things around it to make it as consistent and repeatable as possible and what is the most important is that the human is also in control.

It was a very interesting talk for the new Grammarly® feature where they also used generative AI and what the person there speaking really resonated with me, he said -- so, in technical terms, if you create a algorithm using artificial intelligence, for a long time you always had to make sure that a human was in the loop. So, somewhere along the line you had a human in the loop but what he said -- and I think that's bringing it right to the point -- is it shouldn't be a human in the loop. It should be the AI in the loop and the human in control.

So, maybe jumping to my last slide and also the limitations that I want to bring, maybe I can do a short breathing break so you guys can switch.

Perfect.

So, the limitations of AI: So, we've now seen where we come from. We come from just relationships between words that a computer can learn to relationships of words inside of context to now a computer program being able to answer by exam questions just as good as humans.

What I really want to stress here is that artificial intelligence is a support for the human intelligence. So, we need to find places where it can help and I'm sure there are a lot of places where it can help but we also need to make sure that we have the right process along it and for our case -- so, using AI to create plain language text -- I brought two examples that are still very much limitations: So, the first one that we also saw in our example is the context, obviously, can

be misinterpreted and this problem grows with the complexity of the original text. If I have a very legal text with sentences that are, I don't know, five rows long, it will get harder for an algorithm to break it up and not miss -- or not mess up the context.

And then, also what Robin said, adding words, adding information. This is something where you need actual knowledge. You need to know who your target group is. So, there will still be hard to understand concepts in an "algorithmical plainification."

So, you need a person with knowledge of the audience that needs to add, maybe some more information, more background information to give more explanations on those hard-to-understand concepts.

Awesome.

So, I think that's it from my side.

I hope you guys took away some knowledge of artificial intelligence for text and I'm excited to hear or read any other question that you have.

 MS. BERRY: So, I do have one question for you in the Q and A box, Vanessa, and it was from Tim Man who asks: Do you know what kind of datasets were used to train the AI translator?

 MS. THEEL: Yeah, I do. We build it up ourselves, actually. So, we have our own group of translators for -- in Germany we have easy and plain language. So, there's two types of simplifications and then we have our own translators who have -- who are -- however -- who have learned to be able to do it. And they are experts in the field and we're building up our own dataset with them as experts.

Also, I'm talking to people who need easy or plain language and then we build it up from scratch in the past 2 years.

 MS. BERRY: That's the only question I have in the Q and A, Vanessa.

 MS. THEEL: Perfect. That's good, then --

 MR. DICKENS: Well, we can open up for more questions if you-all have more. Please feel free to ask. The floor is open. We have until 3:00 o'clock if anyone has any more questions, feel free.

 MS. THEEL: Perfect. I can see the chat as well. As someone who speaks other languages, I will say that I use so many tools to help me write and summarize long writings for me to understand better. I feel you. As you guys can probably hear, I'm also not an English native speaker. So, yes, tools also help me quite a lot.

And then another question: What is the difference, if there is one, between AI and machine learning? Just curious.

Yes. So, those are very similar terms but machine learning is one part of artificial intelligence. So, it -- it responds to a specific group of algorithms but it is used very similarly, yes.

 MS. BERRY: And it looks like there's a question for me: How is TCEQ using chat GPT or the like? To my knowledge we are not, at this time. So, this is all interesting information for all of us to consider moving forward.

 MR. DICKENS: Robin, you said you teach some classes for state agencies? Can you expand a little bit more about that?

 MS. BERRY: Well, I teach at TCEQ, and in the past when we didn't have a full roster, we did expand and open up to other agencies but now, of course, that we're fully staffed, we are obviously emphasizing training our own staff. So, at this time we're not opening it up to other agencies, unfortunately; and that's why I was happy to see --

 MR. DICKENS: Aw, shucks.

 MS. BERRY: -- the other offerings, the webinars that are available to people.

 MR. DICKENS: I think this is great information that's vital because we see many businesses and the state agencies and Web sites and including federal Web sites. Many often time there's information that's important just not really in plain language. So, we have to kind of read through and to be able to understand what's being said and able to be able to process information with -- in various situations but sometimes we have to call and ask to get more clarifications or ask more questions because it's not clearly understood. So, we have time to be able to understand. So...

Really, I'm happy that we've had this webinar and to share this information.

Do you have a way to contact both of Robin and Vanessa? If you want to be able to get some more information, you're able to do so.

 MS. BERRY: Sure. I'm at Robin.Berry@TCEQ.Texas.gov. Feel free to shoot me an e-mail.

 MS. THEEL: And for me you can also just contact me via e-mail. I'm happy to hear any thoughts or questions. We're very much in the phase where we're trying stuff out and looking for people who are willing to give us some feedback.

And my e-mail is Vanessa@SUMM-AI.com.

 MS. BERRY: And then Matthew, we have a request for the links to the presentations, and I believe --

 MR. DICKENS: Yes... the Web site will -- will have those -- the webinar will have those PowerPoints as well. So, you'll be able to access those links and that information once this webinar's over and we'll have a recording as well -- [TALKING OVER EACH OTHER INAUDIBLY]

 MS. BERRY: Great.

 MR. DICKENS: If people want to watch it again or have missing information, they're welcome to watch that on our Web site.

 MS. BERRY: And then there's a question about the most effective ways to offer plain language trainings to other staff members who are responsible for writing.

It is a requirement at TCEQ that, as I said early on, if a staff writes for the web, they're required to take both of our classes and then that web page that I suggested in the last of the links offers some suggestions about how to start implementing plain language at your agency.

I -- I do -- would love to see an offering statewide because we are a very big state and, so, it's -- it's great that we can offer that at our agency but we -- we know that others could utilizes it as well and there used to be an offering -- I believe it was offered by an agency that is no longer. And, so, that's a missing. It's very important; and the more people we can get trained on it, the more effective we're going to be at protecting the state, as far as environmental regulations are

concerned.

 MR. DICKENS: Any more questions anyone have?

 MS. BERRY: There is one question about, if you do not have access to chat GPT4, or your agency does not allow its use, can you reduce the reading level below sixth grade level as a substitute?

Someone asked me to record my training and put it on YouTube.

 MS. THEEL: Maybe for the question if you don't have access to, for example, chat GPT, I know that there are kind of like proofreading tools out there that help you filter out very complex words, for example. I know one of them is Hemingway. I think it's a free-to-use editor that you can just open on a Web site where you can insert a text that you have written and it gives you some help and tips on what you can still change in your text. Other than that, feel free to reach out to us because we're, as I said, looking for testers and I'm very happy to get some feedback on it.

 MS. BERRY: And assuming everyone can see --

 MR. DICKENS: Also, I think there's a lot of government agencies that are concerned about the new technology. They're not sure about privacy concern and other -- this other -- so, there's been a challenge with that. So, I think that people are kind of monitoring to see how that's going to be going and what that process looks like.

 MS. THEEL: Yeah. Yeah, we see the same in Germany. I -- I think Germany's the -- probably also very strict on guidelines regarding data privacy, data security. So, yeah, we have exactly the same.

 MS. BERRY: It looks like Lorna has offered a link that the Texas Department of Insurance offers a resource also, if anyone is interested in checking out theirs. It's -- that's in the Q and A.

 MR. DICKENS: Wonderful. Well, I'm happy to hear that -- that the other state agencies are taking those -- those initiatives on. So...

So, now we're on the side of time. So, if -- any last words from the two of you before we were to close?

 MS. BERRY: So, we're -- we're getting a request for our e-mails in the chat box. So...

 MS. THEEL: I'm going to put mine in. Maybe you can answer as well if you click on the answered ones. Yes.

So, Robin, if you're in the Q and A, if you click on the answered questions and scroll down and you can type in your e-mail address as an answer [TALKING OVER ONE ANOTHER]

 MS. BERRY: Got you. Thanks, Vanessa.

 MS. THEEL: Thank you.

 MR. DICKENS: Okay. Well, I think it's time -- time to wrap up this -- this webinar. So, thank you all for your participation in watching this webinar and we'll look forward to other recordings of various -- various webinars that we will have on our Web site. So, I'd like you -- to invite you to look at those because it's lots of various informations that we're offering to people with disabilities and topics that are necessary to provide services that's important to the Texans.

So, Thank you for your time. Have a wonderful week. Take care. Bye-bye.

 MS. THEEL: Thank you so much.

 MS. BERRY: Thank you for moderating and getting this started, Matthew.

 >>: Recording stopped.

This text is being provided in a rough draft format. Communication Access Real-time Translation (C.A.R.T.) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings. It is NOT under any circumstances an official transcript nor admissible evidence.