BACKGROUND PAPER

ON

BRIEF SUBJECT ON BACKGROUND PAPER CONTENTS

1. The background paper is a multipurpose staff communications instrument that transmits ideas or concepts from one agency or person to another. It is an excellent way to express ideas on specific topics and to describe conditions that require action.

2. The most common function of the background paper is to present the background (chronological, problem-solution, etc.) underlying an issue or subject. Paragraphs are written in sentence format and are almost never bulletized.

3. A good paper contains a brief intro paragraph that provides the reader with a clear statement of purpose and an outline or “road map” for the paper. The basic discussion that comprises the bulk of the paper leads the reader to a logical conclusion.

4. The specific format (including style and length) of the Background Paper varies with the purpose. It may be longer than one page. The main point is to make it as short or as long as necessary to cover the topic adequately. Paragraphs are numbered.

a. Margins are 1 inch all around

b. Subparagraphs follow the number/letter convention of the memorandum style letter. If using subparagraphs, never have less than two subparagraphs (i.e. don't have an "a" if you don't have a "b").

 (1) Additional subordinate paragraph. The same rule applies about needing two or more subparagraphs. The following subparagraphs show the standard number/letter format.

 (a) Additional subordinate paragraph

 1 Additional subordinate paragraph

 a Additional subordinate paragraph

 [1] Additional subordinate paragraph

c. Number the pages consecutively, starting with page 2. Enter the page number on the right margin 1/2 inch from the top of the page.

5. Center title using all capital letters. If the third (subject) line is long, it wraps to be centered under the third line with no blank lines between them.

6. Emphasize main points and attach additional support data (refer to in the paper).

7. Include writer’s identification line as shown below on first page only

a. Text in red should be completed by the author. When finished, all text should be changed to black.

b. The identification line is normally placed 1 inch from the bottom and flush with the left margin.

c. If the identification line is placed in the footer, it's 1/2 inch from the bottom and flush with the left margin. Double clicking the footer exposes the text for editing.

8. The key to an effective background paper, like any well-written document, is to get to the point quickly, cover all aspects of the issue in sufficient detail to meet your objective, and close the paper with a sense of finality.