

**Forest Service Handbook  
National Headquarters - Washington Office  
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 6209.12 – Correspondence Handbook  
Zero Code**

**Amendment:** 6209.12-2014-1

**Effective date:** September 02, 2014

**Duration:** This amendment is effective until superseded or removed.

**Approved by:** J. Lenise Lago, Deputy Chief for Business Operations

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**Responsible Staff:**

**Last Change:** 6209.12-2007-1 to chapter 30

**Superseded Document(s):** Entire Handbook including title page; 6209.12\_contents, Amendment 6209.12-2005-7, October 14, 2005; 00--2 thru 03, FSH June 1988 Amend 6, 6209.12\_10, Amendment 6209.12-2005-1, October 03, 2005; 6209.12\_20, Amendment 6209.12-2005-2, October 03, 2005; 6209.12\_30, Amendment 6209.12-2007-1, December 19, 2007; 6209.12\_40, Amendment 6209.12-2005-4, October 06, 2005; 6209.12\_50, Amendment 6209.12-2005-5, October 07, 2005; 6209.12\_60, Amendment 6209.12-2005-6, October 14, 2005

**Digest:** Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

**6209.12:** Revises entire handbook with extensive edits throughout.

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Guidance documents lack the force and effect of law, unless expressly authorized by statute or incorporated into a contract. USDA may not cite, use, or rely on any guidance that is not available through their guidance portal, except to establish historical facts.

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This handbook gives directions and standards for drafting, reviewing, approving, mailing, storing, and tracking Forest Service correspondence.

**01 - Authority**

The general authority to create written material derives from the organizational responsibilities assigned to each office and the job responsibilities assigned to personnel within the unit.

United States Department of Agriculture Departmental Regulation 3060-001, Correspondence Management, describes the processing, management, and response policy for all correspondence received by the Department and requires agencies to develop policies, standards, and procedures for internal correspondence management.

Forest Service Manual (FSM) 6230, Records Creation, Maintenance, and Disposition, sets out Forest Service policies and responsibilities for creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records and other documentary materials.

For a full list of authorities, see FSM 6220.1.

**02 - Objectives**

1. To prepare correspondence in conformance with minimum Government-wide and Departmental standards.
2. To ensure appropriate levels of review and approval of Forest Service correspondence.
3. To properly document official transactions.
4. To minimize the time and cost involved in preparing, reviewing, approving, releasing, retrieving, and tracking official Forest Service correspondence.

**03 - Policy**

All employees who create or process correspondence shall follow the procedures in this handbook to properly prepare correspondence and document official transactions in correspondence.

**04 - Responsibility**

1. The Director, Office of Regulatory and Management Services is responsible for providing service-wide advice and assistance on correspondence procedures, authorities, and responsibilities.
2. Correspondence Managers are responsible for facilitating the processing of all correspondence within their respective staffs.

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3. All employees are responsible for consultation and adherence to the Correspondence Manual and Handbook in carrying out correspondence assignments.

**05 - Definitions**

See FSM 6220.5 for definitions.