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**h:22-50-00 PURPOSE**

This chapter gives instructions on how to answer mail which the White House refers to the Department.

**h:22-50-10 POLICY**

The President has assigned a high priority to the prompt and thorough answering of citizen mail so that he and his Administration can stay close to the people. The Secretary fully supports this policy and has asked each HEW component and office to process White House mail in a timely and responsive manner.

**h:22-50-20 REFERRAL PROCEDURE**

The White House sends both controlled mail (called individual referrals) and uncontrolled mail (known as bulk mail) to the Department. It sends controlled mail to the Secretary, whose Executive Secretariat (ES) refers it to HEW components and offices. The White House sends uncontrolled mail directly to the Office of the Secretary and to other HEW offices, primarily at the POC and agency levels. When an HEW office receives such mail, it prepares a reply and sends it either to the citizen (direct reply) or to a higher level office for signature and mailing to the citizen.

**h:22-50-30 EDITORIAL GUIDELINES**

- A. Begin replies to letters addressed to the President with phrases like "Thank you for *your* letter of \_\_\_\_\_ to President Carter" or "Thank you for writing to President Carter concerning \_\_\_\_\_"

Do not use the phrase "President Carter has asked me to respond to \_\_\_\_\_."

- B. Where possible, program people should prepare the reply so that they may **serve** as contact points for further letters from citizens. As appropriate, they should include their name, address, and telephone number in their replies.

**h:20-50-40 PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS**

Each POC and OS office will institute necessary arrangements **for** meeting the President's expectations for handling White House mail. While these procedures may be designed to fit the needs of the individual POC or OS staff office, they must meet the following minimum requirements.

A. On All White House Mail (Individual Referrals and Bulk)

1. Control the flow of this mail at all times so that each letter can be rapidly and easily tracked and located.
2. For individual referrals, use due date established by OS/ES. For bulk mail, assign a due date of no more than nine working days from date of receipt in the POC or OS office.
3. Route each incoming letter expeditiously so that it reaches the preparing office within 48 hours after receipt in the POC or OS office.

Note: The expeditious routing of White House mail is essential if we are to meet the nine working day limit.

4. Record and maintain centrally within the POC or OS office information on incoming letters to permit follow up on overdue responses. Such information should include name of writer, subject of letter, date of letter, date of receipt, office preparing the reply, and due date.
5. Follow up within 72 hours on overdue responses.
6. Close out each letter to verify that the preparing office has responded to incoming White House mail. The close out process must provide the POC or OS office with information that the preparing office has responded to each letter received.
7. Ensure that copies of all responses to White House mail are maintained in the preparing office and are available upon request to authorized officials.

8. Maintain data on White House mail for the weekly report to the Executive Secretary on the status of such mail. See Section **h:22-50-60**.
9. Keep interim replies to a minimum, but use them: **(a)** when issues are too complex to respond within nine working days; **(b)** where the incoming letter is referred to a regional or field office for reply; or **(c)** when other comparable situations **occur**. When an interim reply is sent, the final reply is due two weeks from the date of the interim.
10. Include the original incoming letter and any correspondence received with it when sending the reply to another component or office for signature and mailing.

B. On Individual Referrals Only

As soon as a direct reply is mailed, send a copy of it, the original incoming letter, and the White House control form to:

Director, Agency Liaison Staff  
Old Executive Office Building  
Room 94, Stop 28

Also close the **record for** the letter on the Secretary's Correspondence Control System. Each POC and OS office must decide from which point or points within the component or office these materials will be sent.

Note : This action is important. It avoids **receiving** erroneous overdue reports from the White House.

C. On Bulk Mail Referred to Regional or Field Units

Any POC or OS office that routinely refers bulk mail to its regional or field units for direct reply does not have to track this mail beyond the interim reply. However, it should:

1. Send an interim reply at the same time it forwards the letter to a regional or field unit for direct reply. Include in the interim reply the name of the unit that will answer the letter and the approximate date of reply.
2. Stress to the answering unit the importance of answering within two weeks after the date of the interim reply.
3. Ensure that regional and field units are answering within the prescribed time limits by sampling copies of direct replies or taking other appropriate measures.

h:22-50-50 CAMPAIGN MAIL

When a POC or OS office receives a **sizeable** volume of "campaign" mail from the White House which creates problems in meeting the processing requirements prescribed in section **h:22-50-40**, it should consult immediately with the OS Executive Secretariat. Both parties should jointly decide the most effective method for responding to this mail.

"Campaign" mail is mail received by the Department, generally over a short period of time, in response to a major national or regional issue involving Department programs, plans, operations, etc.

h:22-50-60 WEEKLY REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

Each POC and OS office should submit a weekly status report on White House mail by close of business each Monday to the Executive Secretary, Room **606G**, Humphrey Building. The report should reflect the workload during the previous week.

Exhibit X22-50-1 illustrates the weekly report format. Each Monday each **POC** and OS staff office should add a line to its report to reflect the previous week's workload, photocopy the report, and send a copy to the Executive Secretary. Adding a line each week to the same page enables those who review the report to compare weekly workloads and discern trends and significant changes in workload. Remember each line reflects data for one week only. It does not show cumulative data.

The weekly report contains these data items:

Number received. Number of individual referrals and bulk letters requiring a reply received in the previous week. Includes mail received from OS/ES and directly from the White House.

Number pending reply. Number of individual pieces of White House mail received in previous week and prior weeks that are awaiting reply.

Number of replies. Number of final and interim replies made during **the previous** week.

Number overdue. Number of pieces of White House mail whose replies were overdue at end of previous week. Report this information by the time frames shown on the weekly report format.

In addition, if White House mail increased significantly during the previous week, include an explanation of why this occurred.

**h:22-50-70** RESPONSIBLE OFFICE

HEW personnel may obtain additional information about the requirements of this chapter from their executive secretariat or from:

OS Executive Secretariat  
Room **606G**, Humphrey Building  
Telephone: **8-245-9098**

WHITE HOUSE MAIL STATUS REPORT  
 (Name of reporting POC or OS Staff Office)

Week Ending	Number Received	Number Pending Reply	Number Of Replies Final	Number Of Replies Interim	5 Days or Less	OVERDUE			
						6 to 15 Days	16 to 30 Days	Over 30 Days	
4/21	27	39	12	2	4	0	1	0	
4/28	16	28	27	3	2	1	0	1	
5/ 5	9	18	19	0	3	0	0	0	
5/12	21	22	17	1	7	1	0	0	
5/19	32	34	20	0	3	2	0	0	
		<u>Sample Only</u>							

Exhibit 22-50-1  
 GENERAL ADMINISTRATION  
 HEW TN-h:78.2 (10/30/78)