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About the FOIA Program

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The organizational structure of the Department's FOIA Program mirrors the decentralized structure of the Department itself. The Department does not maintain a central index or database of records in its possession. Instead, the Department's files are decentralized and maintained by various bureaus and offices throughout the country. DOI's diverse functions, and the sensitive, high profile issues with which it deals, generate a large number of FOIA requests each year.

To make a request for Department records, a requester must make a request directly to the bureau that maintains those records. A request to a particular bureau (for example, a request addressed to regional or field office) will be presumed to seek only records from that particular bureau, unless the request specifies otherwise.

Direct questions about where to send a FOIA request to the bureau that manages the underlying program's [FOIA Requester Center](#).

Address requests to the FOIA contact in the bureau that maintains the requested records after reviewing the [FOIA Contacts page](#).

What We Do

Department's Chief FOIA Officer

The DOI's Solicitor has been designated as the Chief FOIA Officer pursuant to Executive Order 13392 and the OPEN Government Act of 2007. The Chief FOIA Officer has the following responsibilities:

- Department-wide responsibility for efficient and appropriate compliance with the FOIA;
- Monitoring implementation of the FOIA throughout the Department and keeping the Secretary, the Solicitor, and the Attorney General appropriately informed of the Department's performance in implementing the FOIA;
- Recommending to the Secretary such adjustments to agency practices, policies, personnel, and funding as may be necessary to improve its implementation of the FOIA;
- Reviewing and reporting to the Attorney General, through the Secretary, at such times and in such formats as the Attorney General may direct, on the Department's performance in implementing the FOIA;
- Facilitating public understanding of the purposes of the statutory exemptions of the FOIA; and
- Designating FOIA Public Liaison.

Departmental FOIA Office

The Departmental FOIA Office is located within the Office of the Solicitor and assists the Chief FOIA Officer in fulfilling their responsibilities by:

- Developing policies, regulations, guidelines, procedures, and standards for Department wide FOIA implementation;
- Maintaining the DOI FOIA website and its FOIA Library;
- Providing program oversight, technical assistance, and formal training to DOI employees;
- Monitoring bureau/office backlogs through monthly and quarterly reporting;
- Preparing the Department's FOIA annual report based on data entered by FOIA personnel in the bureaus and offices; and
- Helping coordinate high profile or multi-bureau/office request issues.

Bureau/Office-level FOIA Staff

The Department has decentralized its FOIA operations among the bureaus and offices, each of which has a [Bureau FOIA Officer](#) leading its separately managed and resourced FOIA Program.

The Office of the Solicitor FOIA Attorneys

The Office of the Solicitor (SOL) supports the Department's FOIA Program, excluding the Office of the Inspector General (OIG), by providing legal interpretations of the FOIA and guidance. The

SOL also provides legal reviews of many FOIA initial determinations and appeals, assists in developing DOI's FOIA regulations, and handles FOIA/Privacy Act litigation for the Department, excluding the OIG. The OIG, Office of General Counsel, provides legal review of OIG FOIA initial determinations, OIG appeals, and handles OIG FOIA/Privacy Act litigation. Along with the Departmental FOIA Office and the FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer, the SOL also assists in training DOI personnel on FOIA implementation.

The Department's FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer

The Department's FOIA/Privacy Act appeals function is located in and administered by the SOL, excluding the OIG. The OIG appeals function is located in the OIG, Office of General Counsel. The FOIA/Privacy Act Appeals Officer receives, tracks, monitors and issues final determinations on all Departmental FOIA/Privacy Act appeals.

The Department's Public Liaison

The Department has a [FOIA Public Liaison](#) who can assist individuals in locating records. The Public Liaison serves as a supervisory official to whom a requester can raise concerns about the service the requester has received. The FOIA Public Liaison is responsible for assisting in reducing delays, increasing transparency and understanding of the status of requests, and assisting in the resolution of disputes.

The Office of the Inspector General

The Office of the Inspector General is responsible for all OIG FOIA requests, OIG FOIA Appeals, and OIG FOIA/Privacy Act litigation. To find out more about the OIG FOIA/Privacy Act program, please visit the following website:

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