Civil Engineering Writing Project - Genre Unit 2

COVER LETTERS and LETTERS OF TRANSMITTAL

What are cover letters and letters of transmittal? Why do engineers use them?

Engineering firms produce documents for many different clients. Clients receive documents from many different firms. It's not surprising that correspondence is sometimes lost, forgotten or misplaced. Disagreements about which documents were delivered when can delay payment for services and lead to poor customer relationships.

Engineers have developed two simple tools to prevent these problems: the **cover letter** and the **letter of transmittal**. Nearly every engineering document other than a letter report or technical memorandum will include a cover letter attached to the front. The cover letter performs the following functions:

- Identifies the sender and receiver
- Identifies the contract or project number to which the document relates
- Tells the purpose of the document and lists its contents
- Documents the date the document was sent
- Informs the recipient of any required or expected actions and deadlines.

In addition to the cover letter, engineering offices often include a letter of transmittal. The letter of transmittal is a simple check-off form. It performs the same functions as a cover letter but also often includes an acknowledgement of when the document was received by the client and who accepted it. The letter of transmittal may be added by clerical support staff who send the document.

You can think of the cover letter as a polite introduction to the document you are sending and any response you are expecting. The letter of transmittal is the receipt that acknowledges the delivery of the document.

What does a cover letter look like?

A cover letter is a type of business letter. It is simple, direct, and short – never more than one page long. The greeting ("Dear So-and-So") is often omitted. The body contains the information listed above. It always closes with a brief thank you. It uses the standard letterhead of the engineer's firm and follows their formatting standards.

Cover Letter

ABC Consulting Group
200 Longmont Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90041
323-989-4100

1

Nov 3, 2014

Rolling Hill Municipal Water District
1977 Park Hills Drive
East Oakdale, CA 91783
Attn: D. Nguyen

2

Subject: Job No. 2014-1278: Draft Phase I Environmental Assessment for proposed pump station near Mountain Avenue and Rolling Rock Drive, City of East Oakdale, California

3 In response to your request, ABC Consulting Group has conducted a Phase I Environmental Assessment for the proposed pump station in the City of East Oakdale, California. Our draft report is enclosed with recommendations for further investigations for the Phase II Environmental Assessment. Please review this draft and return it to us with any questions or comments by Nov 18, 2014. We will address your comments and submit a final version of the report seven working days after receiving your input.

4 We appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this project. If you have any questions, please call us at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Valerie K. Yang, PE, GE 00000
Principal Engineer

5

Encl: Draft Rpt, 4 cy

Commentary

Key items to note in the cover letter:

1. The sender and receiver are clearly identified.
2. The job number and subject line clearly identify the project.
3. The first paragraph of the letter
   - states that this report is being delivered in response to the client's request
   - lists what is enclosed (the draft report, including recommendations)
   - tells the response needed from the client (review of the draft with comments) and the deadline.
4. The letter closes by thanking the client for the work and offering to answer any questions.
5. The line at the bottom of the letter lists the documents enclosed in the deliverable, in this case four copies of the draft report.

A cover letter nearly always accompanies a document unless the document itself already incorporates the information of a cover letter (for example, a letter report or technical memorandum). A cover letter is appropriate even when the engineer is not expecting a formal reply, such as when delivering final reports. It's required when detailed instructions must be provided to the client since such instructions are difficult to include on the letter of transmittal.

What does a letter of transmittal look like?

The exact form of the letter of transmittal varies between firms, but in nearly all cases it a check-off form that requires no composition. It contains a place for the client to sign acknowledging having received the document. Two copies are generally used. One stays with the delivered document and the other returns to the engineer's firm.

Letter of transmittal

ABC Consulting Group
200 Longmont Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90041
323-989-4100

Letter of Transmittal

1

2

To: _____ Date: _____
Attention: _____ Our Job No.: _____
Address: _____ Your Job No.: _____
_____

3

4

We are transmitting:	Via:	For your:	Please:
☐ Per Your Request	☐ Mail	☐ Approval	☐ Acknowledge Receipt
☐ Enclosed	☐ Courier	☐ Review and Comment	☐ Return Enclosures
☐ Under Separate Cover	☐ Overnight	☐ Distribution	☐ Review and Return
☐ Plans	☐ Fax	☐ Information/Files	☐ Respond by:
☐ Specifications	☐ FTP/email		_____
☐ Reports			
☐ Letters			

5

Enclosures: (If enclosures are not as noted please inform us immediately)

Quantity	Description	Dated

Remarks:

Received by:

6

Signed: _____
Name: _____
Date: _____

Signed: _____
ABC Consulting Group, Inc.

Commentary

Key items to note in the form:

1. The sender and receiver are clearly identified.
2. The form lists job numbers for both client and engineer so the reason for sending the document will be clear to the client.
3. Items being transmitted and the method of delivery are clear.
4. The "For Your:" and "Please:" columns identify what the engineer expects the client to do with the deliverables, and what the deadline is, if any.
5. Details of items in the package (enclosures) are listed.
6. It includes a place for the client to sign acknowledging receipt of the document.

Using a letter of transmittal form is easy and fast, and it helps to eliminate mistakes since most possible options are listed on the form. However, the form is impersonal, so an engineer will usually write a cover letter to communicate more directly with the client. Some firms include a letter of transmittal with every document they send; others use it only when a receipt of delivery is needed.

Tips for Writing Letters of Transmittal or Cover Letters

- These are very simple documents with a very clear purpose. Keep them simple and short—one page maximum.
- If your firm has a standard format, use it.
- When you're writing a cover letter, use the letter of transmittal form as a checklist to ensure you've included all the necessary items.

Practice

Three samples of student cover letters are attached. Review each letter and identify any weaknesses and errors. Then rewrite each letter to address the problems you identified.

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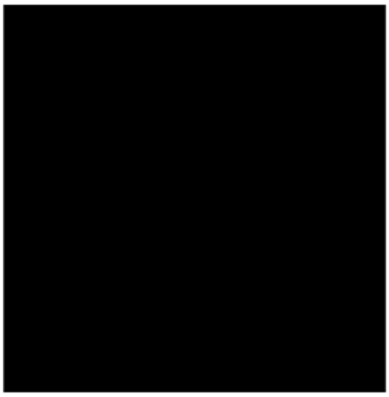
Example #1

CE327L: Geotechnical Engineering Laboratory
Project No. 2137 | CPP College of Agriculture



December 9th, 2013
[redacted] College of Agriculture
California Polytechnic University, Pomona
3801 West Temple Avenue
Pomona, CA 91768

Geotechnical Investigation
CE 327L-01

Dear Dr. [redacted],

As founding members of DFR Consulting, we are proud to have the opportunity to aid in the investigation and construction of a structure for one of the top ranked public universities in the nation. Each of the founding members is dedicated to using their knowledge and engineering experience to provide superior quality data, designs, and recommendations. Attached is our geotechnical report for the new planned building for the College of Agriculture. It contains information about the field exploration, laboratory calculations, and engineering recommendations pertinent to the project.

As the preliminary analysis for the project comes to a close, we have been grateful for the opportunity. We greatly appreciate your business, and hope to work with you in the future. Thank you.

Sincerely, DFR Consulting

_____

[redacted]
Project Manager

Example #2

TERZAGHI Geotechnical Engineering
1234 Soil Boulevard
Atterberg, California 95559

March 13th, 2012

California State Polytechnic University Pomona
3801 West Temple Avenue
Pomona, California 91768

Attention: Mr. [redacted]

Re: Geotechnical Investigation for Project #2121
College of Agriculture Office Building
Agricultural Field, East End of Citrus Lane
City of Pomona, California

Mr. [redacted]

All of us here at TERZAGHI Geotechnical Engineering are happy to transmit our geotechnical investigation report of the agricultural field at the East end of Citrus Lane for the proposed two-story structure. The scope of our services is outlined in the Project Description given to us on January 3, 2012.

It has been a pleasure working with you on this project; we greatly appreciated the opportunity to complete this investigation for you. We will be happy to provide any further investigations or observation services during construction. If any questions should arise from this report please do not hesitate to contact us directly.

We look forward to working with you again in the near future.

Sincerely,
TERZAGHI Geotechnical Engineering

[redacted] [redacted]

Example #3

Green Leaf and Associates, Inc.

December 11, 2013

Project No. 2137

To: California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
3801 W Temple Ave.
Pomona, CA 91768

Attention: [redacted]

Subject: Geotechnical Investigation, Proposed Lab and Office Building, Southwest of Citrus Lane, Northwest of South Campus Drive, City of Pomona, California

In response to your request, Green Leaf and Associates, Inc. has conducted a geotechnical investigation for the proposed building of a new two-story structure to house offices and labs for the College of Agriculture in the city of Pomona. The purpose of the investigation has been to explore the subsurface conditions, to determine the general soil characteristics at the site, and to provide geotechnical recommendations for the design and construction of the new two-story structure.

We appreciate the opportunity to work with you on this project. If you have any questions, or if we can be of further service, please call us at your convenience.

Respectfully submitted,

Green Leaf And Associates, Inc.

[redacted]
Geotechnical Engineer, Lead

[redacted]
Geotechnical Engineer