Student Guide

Course: Marking Classified Information

Lesson 1: General Marking Requirements

Lesson Introduction

1. Scenario

You receive a phone call from your co-worker Alex. See what he has to say.

Good morning! It’s Alex. I hope you are settling in. I was wondering if I could drop a document off at your desk? I think it could be really helpful to get you started. See you soon.

Your coworker thinks this document might help you understand standard classification markings. Let's look at it more closely and examine the general marking requirements and standard markings.

2. Objectives

When you encounter a piece of classified information, you should immediately be alerted to the presence of classified information and the level of classification. You may be alerted by the bold banner line at the top and bottom of the document declaring the document is Top Secret. Or you might notice a few lines at the bottom of the page that indicate when the information will be declassified. These are both examples of markings applied to classified information.

Take a moment to review the lesson objectives.

- Identify the purpose of marking classified information
- Identify the policy and regulatory foundations for marking classified information
- Identify standard markings
- Apply standard markings to the correct locations on a document

Why Mark?

1. Purpose

In an era when information is more accessible to more people than at any other time in history, it is vital to the safety and security of the nation to understand the need to limit access to certain types of information. Information may become classified when national security could be jeopardized by its ready availability. Information that, in the wrong hands, could be used to
endanger the safety of our intellectual property, our military operations, or even American lives, must be protected. When release of the information no longer poses a threat, it is declassified and may be released to the public if appropriate under law. So what role does marking play?

The purpose of marking is to provide required information about classification. This includes alerting the holder to the presence of classified information and specifically identifying what information needs protecting and the level of protection required. Marking also identifies who classified the document and provides guidance for future downgrading or declassification. It identifies the reason for the classification, and alerts the holder to any special access, dissemination, or safeguarding requirements.

The standard markings applied to all classified information keeps the holder of the information aware of the sensitivity of the items in his or her care. Looking at the document Alex left on your desk, you can see how the markings provide this important information.

**TOP SECRET//FGI//IMCON/RELIDO**

Department of Good Works

Washington, D.C.

10 April 2012

Subject: (U) Marking Instructions

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; portion marked with the designation “U.”

(//FGI C) This paragraph contains Confidential, foreign government information from a concealed country; portion marked as “//FGI C.”

(S) This paragraph contains Secret information; portion marked with the designation “S.”

(S//IMC) This paragraph contains Secret Controlled Imagery information; portion marked with the designation “S//IMC.”

(TS//RELIDO) This paragraph contains Top Secret information and whose further release is determined by a designated intelligence disclosure official; portion marked as “TS//RELIDO.”

Classified By: D. Bottemly, DoGW Analyst

Reason: 1.4(a)

Downgrade To: Confidential on 20161115

Declassify On: 20210515
Marking Classified Information  
Lesson 1: General Marking Requirements  

The highest level of sensitivity is clearly displayed right at the top. If you have questions about why the document was classified or whether all of the markings are correct, you can find the information regarding who classified the information and why, in the classification authority block at the bottom. By learning to identify and apply these markings, you help to protect this vital information.

2. Definitions and Regulatory Guidance

To ensure that marking standards stay current with advances in technology and changes in policy, the markings and restrictions on classified information are constantly monitored and updated. Let’s examine how these standards are established.

In 2009 the President issued Executive Order 13526, which established new standards for the classification of national security information. This order prescribes the marking information you will learn in this course.

The Information Security Oversight Office, or ISOO, develops, coordinates, and issues implementing directives and instructions that bind Executive Branch agencies. The ISOO released specific guidance regarding Executive Order 13526. After releasing 32 CFR, Part 2001 and 2003, Final Rule, ISOO also released a visual guide to marking.

To effectively and efficiently facilitate the marking of classified information under the new order the Department of Defense issued DoD Manual 5200.01, Volumes 1 through 4, DoD Information Security Program. Specifically, volume 2 of this manual contains the DoD procedures for marking classified information. The intelligence community may have additional marking and handling requirements. These resources are available to you to advance your understanding of the principles and standards of marking classified information.

Overall Classification Process

1. Who Can Classify?

Who makes the determinations about what should or should not be classified? A limited number of people can make that decision. The person who makes the decision is called an Original Classification Authority, or OCA. The authority to originally classify information is associated with the position, not the individual holding that position.

To become an OCA, one must be authorized in writing by the President, the Vice President, secretaries of military departments, or other, delegated United States Government officials designated by the President. OCAs have a lot of responsibility. In addition to making the initial determination on whether information should be classified and why, they are also responsible for ensuring that information is properly marked and that information is maintained at the proper level of security for the proper length of time.
At least once per calendar year, all OCAs must receive training in proper classification, including the avoidance of overclassification, and declassification as provided in the Executive Order and its implementing directives. OCAs must follow a defined process to create an originally classified document. Once an OCA determines that something should be classified, the OCA can proceed to apply the necessary markings. But OCAs are not the only people who are able to create classified information. When a document is created that incorporates, paraphrases, restates, or otherwise generates classified information in a new form, it is called derivative classification.

Derivatively classified documents may be produced by personnel whose duties involve handling classified information. The person who produces this new document is called a derivative classifier. Similar to an OCA, a derivative classifier will need to ensure the transfer of the proper markings from the original document or documents to the newly created or derived piece of information. The derivative classifier must also be concerned with properly citing his or her sources, so that all source information is clear and readily verifiable.

2. What Can Be Classified?

How did the information you will be working with become classified? What information can and should be classified? For information to be considered for classification, an OCA must determine that its release would cause damage to national security. Only information that falls into at least one of eight categories can be eligible for classification.

These categories are defined by Executive Order 13526. They include military plans, weapons systems, or operations; foreign government information; intelligence activities (including covert action), intelligence sources or methods, or cryptology; foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States, including confidential sources; scientific, technological, or economic matters relating to national security; United States government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities; vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects or plans, or protection services relating to the national security; and weapons of mass destruction.

These categories are listed on the Reason line of originally classified information and are formatted as they appear here with the number “1.4” followed by one or more of the letters A through H, or they may be spelled out. Select Eligible Categories to view the list of categories from the Executive Order.
a. Eligible Categories

Categories of Information Eligible for Classification Under E.O. 13526, Section 1.4:

1.4(a) Military plans, weapons systems, or operations
1.4(b) Foreign government information
1.4(c) Intelligence activities, (including covert action), intelligence sources or methods, or cryptology
1.4(d) Foreign relations or foreign activities of the United States, including confidential sources
1.4(e) Scientific, technological or economic matters relating to national security
1.4(f) United States government programs for safeguarding nuclear materials or facilities
1.4(g) Vulnerabilities or capabilities of systems, installations, infrastructures, projects or plans, or protection services relating to the national security
1.4(h) Weapons of mass destruction

3. Levels of Classification

Classifying information protects national security from damage or danger posed by the inappropriate use of the information. Different levels of protection are applied based on the potential damage the information might cause if it fell into the wrong hands. The three levels of classification in the United States are:

- Confidential—unauthorized disclosure would cause damage national security
- Secret— unauthorized disclosure to the public would cause serious damage to national security
- Top Secret— unauthorized disclosure to the public would cause exceptionally grave damage to national security

You may encounter markings that identify all three classification levels in a single classified document. In addition to the classification levels, unclassified information will also be marked as such. Proper markings alert holders to what level of security clearance an individual must have to access the information. The more sensitive the information, the higher the security clearance needed.
Portion and Banner Markings

1. Introduction

Now let's look at the standard markings you will see on classified documents. Look closely at the document Alex gave you.

TOP SECRET//FGI//IMCON/RELIDO

Department of Good Works

Washington, D.C.

10 April 2012

Subject: (U) Marking Instructions

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; portion marked with the designation “U.”

(//FGI C) This paragraph contains Confidential, foreign government information from a concealed country; portion marked as “//FGI C.”

(S) This paragraph contains Secret information; portion marked with the designation “S.”

(S//IMC) This paragraph contains Secret Controlled Imagery information; portion marked with the designation “S//IMC.”

(TS//RELIDO) This paragraph contains Top Secret information and whose further release is determined by a designated intelligence disclosure official; portion marked as “TS//RELIDO.”

Classified By: D. Bottemly, DoGW Analyst

Reason: 1.4(a)

Downgrade To: Confidential on 20161115

Declassify On: 20210515

TOP SECRET//FGI//IMCON/RELIDO

All classified documents contain these markings: banner markings, portion markings, and a classification authority block detailing who classified the information, why, and how long the information must remain classified. Markings denote the classification level of each portion. They indicate the highest level of classification in the document. They state whether any dissemination controls apply to the document. And finally, they alert the holder to who classified
the document, the reason why, applicable downgrading and the duration of classification.
2. **Portion Markings**

Portion markings identify the classification levels of individual sections of a document. If you look at the document Alex gave you, you will see that each line starts with a different mark. Every portion in every classified document is marked to show the highest level of classification that it contains. This includes the subject, title, paragraphs, sections, tabs, attachments, the classified signature block, bullets, tables, and even pictures.

There are four portion markings: U for Unclassified, C for Confidential, S for Secret, and TS for Top Secret. All of these abbreviations appear in parentheses before the portion to which they apply. They are always capital letters.

Examples of portion marking:

- (U) This is the portion marking for Unclassified information.
- (C) This is the portion marking for Confidential information.
- (S) This is the portion marking for Secret information.
- (TS) This is the portion marking for Top Secret information.

3. **Banner Lines**

Take a look at the top of your document. These are the banner line markings. The banner indicates the highest overall classification level of information contained in a document. Banner lines on interior pages may either have the highest overall classification of the document or the highest classification level of information on that page. They are the most restrictive control markings and apply to the overall document. There are four banner markings: UNCLASSIFIED, CONFIDENTIAL, SECRET, and TOP SECRET.

These markings show the correct formatting for a banner line.

```
UNCLASSIFIED
CONFIDENTIAL
SECRET
TOP SECRET
```

The markings always appear in uppercase letters in English, with the full classification level spelled out in full. The classification designation is never abbreviated. For example, you will see TOP SECRET written out, not TS. Only one level of classification per document may appear in the banner line.
Learning Activity 1

Read the partial document and then answer the question that follows. Check your answer in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “U.”

(S) This paragraph contains Secret information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “S.”

(C) This paragraph contains Confidential information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “C.”

Based on the portion markings, what is the correct level of classification to indicate in the banner line of a document that contains the above information?

- UNCLASSIFIED
- CONFIDENTIAL
- SECRET
- TOP SECRET
Control and Dissemination Markings

Now that you have learned about banner markings and portion markings to indicate classification level, let’s look at some ways to further control information. In addition to the highest level of classification displayed in the banner line of a classified document, there are other markings that must appear if applicable. These abbreviations, separated by double forward slashes, are known as control markings and dissemination control markings.

These markings alert you to any special instructions regarding its contents. Control markings are also used to identify the presence of special categories of information such as Sensitive Compartmented Information, or SCI, Foreign Government Information, or FGI, or Restricted Data, or RD. You will learn more about these special categories of information later. The banner line of the document you are holding shows the correct use of control markings. These markings are required in both the banner line and portion markings, where applicable.

When applying control markings to a document, use double forward slashes to separate the classification level from the control markings and dissemination markings.

Example:

**TOP SECRET//FGI//IMCON/RELIDO**

If you need more than one control marking, use a double forward slash to separate different marking categories and use a single forward slash to separate multiple types within the same marking category. Dissemination controls appear in the last portion of the banner line and portions. They are special handling caveats that apply to items, elements, or categories of information. Dissemination controls identify the expansion or limitation on the distribution of information. Sometimes the distribution might be limited. Other times distribution may be prohibited. These markings address the special concerns of how to handle the information or to whom it can be transmitted.

Learning Activity 2

*Select which type of marking each banner contains. Check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Banner</th>
<th>Control Markings</th>
<th>Dissemination Control Markings</th>
<th>Both</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SECRET//FOUO</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP SECRET//RD//NOFORN</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP SECRET//FGI</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Classification Authority Block

The last set of markings that must appear on classified information is the Classification Authority Block. This block of text tells who classified this information, why, and how long it must remain classified. On the document your coworker provided to you, this block of information appears at the bottom of the first page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TOP SECRET//FGI//IMCON/RELIDO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Good Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington, D.C.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject: (U) Marking Instructions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; portion marked with the designation “U.”

(/FGI C) This paragraph contains Confidential, foreign government information from a concealed country; portion marked as “/FGI C.”

(S) This paragraph contains Secret information; portion marked with the designation “S.”

(S//IMC) This paragraph contains Secret Controlled Imagery information; portion marked with the designation “S//IMC.”

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Classified By: D. Bottemly, DoGW Analyst
Reason: 1.4(a)
Downgrade To: Confidential on 20161115
Declassify On: 20210515

The information that will appear in this block is the name and position or identifier of the original or derivative classifier, the agency, and the office of origin. If this document is originally classified, it must state the reason for classification. If it was derivatively classified, it must identify the source documents from which it was derived. Finally, it must include the downgrade date, if applicable, and the declassification date, unless the information is Restricted Data or
Formerly Restricted Data or otherwise exempted information, such as human intelligence information.

Learning Activity 3

Read the document and then answer the question that follows. Check your answer in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.

How many years will this document be classified as Top Secret?

- 2 years
- 4 years
- 9 years
- 10 years
Review Activity 1

*Which document is the original source for the categories of information that are eligible for classification? Check your answer in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.*

- Executive Order 13526
- DoDM 5200.01, Vol. 2
- ISOO Marking Classified National Security Information Booklet

Review Activity 2

*An OCA is marking an originally classified document. Determine the correct portion and banner markings. Check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.*

(1) __________________________

Department of Good Works
Washington, D.C.

14 September 2011

Subject: (2) ____ Subject is Unclassified

(3) ____ This paragraph contains Unclassified information.

(4) ____ This paragraph contains Confidential information.

(5) ____ This paragraph contains Secret information.

1) The banner line at the top center of the document (Field 1) should be marked with the following:

- UNCLASSIFIED
- CONFIDENTIAL
- SECRET
- TOP SECRET
2) The Subject line (Field 2) should be marked with the following:

- (U)
- (C)
- (S)
- (TS)

3) The first paragraph (Field 3) should be marked with the following:

- (U)
- (C)
- (S)
- (TS)

4) The second paragraph (Field 4) should be marked with the following:

- (U)
- (C)
- (S)
- (TS)

5) The third paragraph (Field 5) should be marked with the following:

- (U)
- (C)
- (S)
- (TS)
Review Activity 3

An OCA is marking an originally classified document. Determine the correct markings for each line of the classification authority block. Check your answers in the Answer Key at the end of this Student Guide.

(1) _________ L. Woodsman, DoGW Analyst

(2) _________ 1.4(e)

(3) _________ 20170211

SECRET

1) The first line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 1) should be marked with the following:
   - UNCLASSIFIED
   - Classified By:
   - Declassify On:
   - DoGW Analyst

2) The second line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 2) should be marked with the following:
   - Reason:
   - Declassify On:
   - Derived From:
   - Military Plans

3) The third line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 3) should be marked with the following:
   - SECRET
   - FOUO
   - Declassify On:
   - L. Woodsman
Answer Key

Learning Activity 1

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “U.”

(S) This paragraph contains Secret information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “S.”

(C) This paragraph contains Confidential information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “C.”

Based on the portion markings, what is the correct level of classification to indicate in the banner line of a document that contains the above information?

○ UNCLASSIFIED
○ CONFIDENTIAL
● SECRET
○ TOP SECRET

Learning Activity 2

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<td>●</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOP SECRET//FGI</td>
<td>●</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning Activity 3

TOP SECRET

April 10, 2012

Subject: (U) Marking Instructions

(U) This paragraph contains Unclassified information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “U.”

(TS) This paragraph contains Top Secret information; therefore, it will be marked with the designation “TS.”

Classified By: D. Bottemly, DoGW Analyst
Reason: 1.4(a)
Downgrade To: Confidential on 20160410
Declassify On: 20210515

TOP SECRET

How many years will this document be classified as Top Secret?

- 2 years
- 4 years
- 9 years
- 10 years

Review Activity 1

Which document is the original source for the categories of information that are eligible for classification?

- Executive Order 13526
- DoDM 5200.01, Vol. 2
- ISOO Classified National Security Information; Final Rule
- ISOO Marking Classified National Security Information Booklet
Review Activity 2

(1) ______________________

Department of Good Works
Washington, D.C.

14 September 2011

Subject: (2) ____ Subject is Unclassified

(3) ____ This paragraph contains Unclassified information.

(4) ____ This paragraph contains Confidential information.

(5) ____ This paragraph contains Secret information.

1) The banner line at the top center of the document (Field 1) should be marked with the following:

○ UNCLASSIFIED
○ CONFIDENTIAL
● SECRET
○ TOP SECRET

2) The Subject line (Field 2) should be marked with the following:

● (U)
○ (C)
○ (S)
○ (TS)

3) The first paragraph (Field 3) should be marked with the following:

● (U)
○ (C)
○ (S)
○ (TS)

4) The second paragraph (Field 4) should be marked with the following:

○ (U)
● (C)
UNCLASSIFIED – CLASSIFICATION MARKINGS FOR TRAINING PURPOSES ONLY

Lesson 1: General Marking Requirements

Marking Classified Information

Student Guide

○ (S)
○ (TS)

5) The third paragraph (Field 5) should be marked with the following:

○ (U)
○ (C)
• (S)
○ (TS)

Review Activity 3

(1) L. Woodsman, DoGW Analyst

(2) 1.4(e)

(3) 20170211

SECRET

1) The first line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 1) should be marked with the following:

○ UNCLASSIFIED
• Classified By:
○ Declassify On:
○ DoGW Analyst

2) The second line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 2) should be marked with the following:

• Reason:
○ Declassify On:
○ Derived From:
○ Military Plans

3) The third line of the Classification Authority Block (Field 3) should be marked with the following:

○ SECRET
○ FOUO
• Declassify On:
○ L. Woodsman