SOP: Escalation Protocols for Unresolved or Serious Issues

This SOP defines **escalation protocols for unresolved or serious issues**, detailing the step-by-step process for identifying, reporting, and escalating problems that cannot be resolved at the initial point of contact. It covers criteria for escalation, communication channels, roles and responsibilities of involved personnel, timelines for response, and documentation requirements to ensure timely resolution and minimize operational impact.

1. Purpose

To establish a structured approach for escalating unresolved or serious issues, ensuring prompt attention, effective communication, and quick resolution to minimize negative impact on operations.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all employees, departments, and stakeholders involved in the identification and resolution of operational, technical, or compliance issues within the organization.

3. Definitions

- **Escalation:** The process of reporting an issue to a higher authority or specialized team when it cannot be resolved at the initial level.
- **Serious Issue:** Any problem posing significant risk to safety, compliance, customer satisfaction, or business continuity.
- **Unresolved Issue:** Problems that remain open after a reasonable effort has been made to resolve them at the current level.

4. Criteria for Escalation

- Issue exceeds assigned staff's authority or capability.
- Potential or actual impact on business operations is significant.
- Issue remains unresolved beyond predefined response time.
- Legal, compliance, or safety concerns are identified.
- Customer complaints that could affect reputation or SLAs.

5. Escalation Process

1. **Identify** the issue and attempt resolution following standard procedures.
2. **Assess** if the issue meets escalation criteria.
3. **Report** the issue using the designated escalation form (see Documentation below).
4. **Notify** the immediate supervisor or escalation contact via approved communication channels (see below).
5. **Document** all actions taken and communication logs in the issue tracking system.
6. **Monitor** the escalation progress and provide regular updates to stakeholders.
7. **Resolve/Close** the issue upon successful resolution and document the outcome.

6. Communication Channels

- Email to dedicated escalation address
- Internal ticketing or incident management system
- Phone call or SMS for urgent/critical issues
- Instant messaging or team collaboration platforms

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Employee/Initiator	Identify and report the issue, attempt initial resolution, document details.
Supervisor/Manager	Review assessment, authorize and coordinate escalation, communicate with relevant teams.

Escalation Team	Investigate, resolve escalated issues, provide regular progress updates.
Senior Management	Intervene for critical/high-level issues, allocate resources, make strategic decisions as needed.
Documentation Owner	Ensure all escalation details and outcomes are recorded for compliance and future reference.

8. Timelines for Response and Escalation

Escalation Level	Response Time	Action
Level 1 (Immediate Supervisor)	Within 2 business hours	Assess and address issue, escalate further if unresolved.
Level 2 (Department Head/Specialist)	Within 4 business hours of Level 1 escalation	Deeper investigation, possible resolution or further escalation.
Level 3 (Senior Management)	Within 1 business day of Level 2	Strategic intervention and resource allocation.

9. Documentation Requirements

- Escalation report detailing issue description, attempted actions, communication log, and stakeholders involved.
- Timelines for escalation and summary of each escalation level contacted.
- Final resolution and closure notes.

10. Review and Continuous Improvement

- Escalation logs should be reviewed quarterly for trends and improvement areas.
- Training sessions to update employees on escalation protocols as needed.
- SOP to be reviewed and updated annually or after major incidents.

For questions regarding this SOP, contact the Compliance or Quality Assurance department.