Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) Template: Non-conformance, Damage, and Returns Handling

This SOP details the procedures for managing **non-conformance, damage, and returns handling**, including the identification and documentation of non-conforming products, evaluation and segregation of damaged goods, processing customer returns efficiently, root cause analysis, corrective actions to prevent recurrence, communication protocols with stakeholders, and maintaining accurate records. The goal is to ensure consistent quality control, minimize losses, and enhance customer satisfaction through prompt and effective resolution of issues related to product non-conformance and damage.

1. Purpose

To outline the standardized procedures to identify, document, evaluate, and process non-conforming, damaged goods, and customer returns, ensuring quality control and customer satisfaction.

2. Scope

This procedure applies to all employees involved in receiving, inspecting, storing, and dispatching products, as well as those handling customer returns.

3. Responsibilities

- **Warehouse/Receiving Staff:** Identification and segregation of non-conforming or damaged goods.
- **Quality Assurance:** Evaluation, root cause analysis, and documentation.
- **Customer Service:** Coordinating and communicating with customers regarding returns.
- **Management:** Approving corrective actions and monitoring the effectiveness.

4. Procedure

1. **Identification and Documentation**
   - Inspect all incoming and outgoing products for conformity and damage.
   - Immediately report any non-conformances or damage using the **Non-Conformance Report (NCR)** form.
   - Label non-conforming/damaged goods appropriately (e.g., "Quarantine", "Rejected").

2. **Evaluation and Segregation**
   - Quality Assurance reviews NCRs and inspects the affected items.
   - Determine the type/severity of non-conformance or damage.
   - Segregate non-conforming goods in designated holding/quarantine areas.

3. **Processing Customer Returns**
   - Customer Service receives return requests, verifies eligibility, and issues return authorization.
   - Returned goods are inspected upon arrival and documented using NCRs if non-conformance/damage is found.
   - Update the returns log with details of goods, reason for return, and resolution steps.

4. **Root Cause Analysis & Corrective Actions**
   - Quality Assurance conducts root cause analysis within 3 business days of detection.
   - Determine and document corrective and preventive actions (CAPA).
   - Assign responsibility and track the implementation of corrective actions.
   - Review effectiveness after a defined period.

5. **Communication**
   - Inform relevant stakeholders (suppliers, logistics, management, and customers) of issues and resolutions.
   - Maintain transparent records accessible to authorized personnel.

6. **Records Management**
   - Keep accurate records of NCRs, returns, CAPAs, and stakeholder communications for a minimum of 2 years.
   - Archive records digitally and ensure data protection in compliance with company policies.

5. Related Documents and Forms

- Non-Conformance Report (NCR) Form
- Customer Return Authorization Form
- Root Cause Analysis & Corrective Action Report
- Returns Log Sheet

6. Revision History

Revision	Date	Description of Change	Approved By
1.0	2024-06-01	Initial Release	QA Manager

7. Approval

Name: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____