

SOP: Tiered Escalation Protocols and Timelines

This SOP details **tiered escalation protocols and timelines**, outlining the structured process for escalating issues based on severity and urgency, defining clear roles and responsibilities, specifying communication channels at each tier, establishing response and resolution timeframes, and ensuring timely notification to relevant stakeholders. The goal is to enhance problem resolution efficiency and maintain operational continuity through systematic escalation procedures.

1. Purpose

To ensure prompt, structured, and effective resolution of issues by classifying them by severity and urgency, and by defining escalation steps, roles, communication channels, and timelines.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all staff and departments responsible for handling operational, technical, and customer-facing issues within the organization.

3. Definitions

- **Escalation:** The process of involving higher-level authority or expertise when an issue cannot be resolved at the current level.
- **Severity:** The impact level of an issue (e.g., Critical, High, Medium, Low).
- **Urgency:** The required speed of response and resolution.
- **Tier:** A distinct level of support or management (e.g., Tier 1 - Frontline, Tier 2 - Specialist, Tier 3 - Management).

4. Escalation Tiers & Protocols

Tier	Scope / Example Issues	Responsible Role	Communication Channel	Response Timeframe	Resolution Timeframe	Escalation Criteria
Tier 1 (Frontline/Helpdesk)	Basic inquiries, standard incidents, minor disruptions	Frontline Support Staff	Email, Ticket System, Phone	15 min (Critical) 1 hr (Non-critical)	2 hrs (Critical) 4 hrs (Non-critical)	Cannot resolve or outage is ongoing after expected timeframe or issue escalates in severity
Tier 2 (Specialist/Technical)	Complex issues, repeated Tier 1 failures, elevated impact	Specialist, Technical Team	Internal Messaging, Direct Call, Ticket Assignment	15 min	4 hrs (Critical) 8 hrs (Non-critical)	Unresolved at Tier 2 within the set timeframe or broader impact detected
Tier 3 (Management/Executive)	Widespread outages, persistent/recurrent critical issues, compliance/escalated risks	Team Lead, Manager, Executive Sponsor	Phone, Email, Executive Channel	Immediate (Critical) 30 min (Non-critical)	Until resolution/mitigation (priority handling)	Requires stakeholder/external communications or urgent resource escalation

5. Notification Protocols

- During each escalation, the responsible party must notify:
 - Direct supervisor/manager of the involved team
 - Relevant stakeholders (e.g., business owner, IT, security, compliance) via agreed channels
 - Document escalation in the incident tracking/ticketing system

6. Roles & Responsibilities

- **Frontline Staff:** Initial issue assessment, first attempt at resolution, timely escalation
- **Specialists/Technical Team:** Advanced troubleshooting, executing escalation or mitigation steps, updating records
- **Managers/Executives:** Strategic decisions, resource allocation, external/stakeholder communication, final resolution authority

7. Timelines Summary

Severity	Initial Response	Tier 1 Resolution	Tier 2 Resolution
Critical	15 min	2 hrs	4 hrs
Non-critical	1 hr	4 hrs	8 hrs

**If an issue cannot be resolved within stated timeframes, escalate to the next tier immediately.*

8. Documentation & Review

- All escalations and communications must be logged in the issue tracking or ticket system.
- Post-resolution, conduct a review (postmortem) to identify process improvements and update the SOP as needed.

9. Revision History

Date	Version	Description of Change	Author
2024-06-11	1.0	Initial draft	[Your Name]