



Joint Standard Operating Procedure

JOINT SOP

Title	Multi-Agency Complaint Escalation Process
Version	v1.0
Purpose	The purpose of this procedure is to provide clear guidance on the path of escalation for complaints in relation to behaviour or conduct of an individual, where the individuals are from two or more agencies and local resolution has been unsuccessful.
Scope	<p>In Scope</p> <p>This procedure outlines the escalation mechanism for complaints between individuals to be raised and dealt with across two or more agencies. Local resolution by local management structure should be utilised in the first instance, prior to escalation.</p> <p>This procedure applies primarily to operational situations where personnel from different agencies are working in a multi-agency environment, however, can be applied to training and exercising environments.</p> <p>This procedure applies to all personnel of relevant agencies, whether they be paid staff, volunteers or contractors.</p> <p>Out of Scope</p> <p>This procedure does not replace individual agency responsibilities or internal processes regarding the management of complaints. Nor detail or replace any legislative OH&S requirements with regards to safety and welfare of personnel. Agencies must ensure they are compliant with their own agency requirements and legal obligations.</p> <p>This procedure does not address the process for resolution at the local level, nor details how complaints should be managed.</p> <p>This process does not provide instructions on how complaints should be investigated, reported, recorded, communicated or resolved as HR professionals are expected to follow their own agency procedures and legislative responsibilities</p> <p>This procedure does not detail required code of conduct. Personnel are expected to abide by relevant codes of conduct. For example, their agency's code of conduct or the Code of conduct for Victorian Public Sector employees.</p> <p>For complaints arising between personnel of the same agency, that cannot be resolved locally, internal complaints processes should be adhered to.</p>

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	<p>Where the complaint relates to a disagreement between agencies relating to roles and responsibilities, this is to be escalated through the Emergency Response Coordinator at the relevant tier.</p>
<p>Applicable Agencies</p>	<p>The following agencies will apply this JSOP due to legislative responsibilities or agency role defined within the State Emergency Management Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CFA • EMV • DEECA • FRV • VICSES <p>This procedure applies to the Responder agencies, but other agencies can adopt this process if relevant. Anyone involved in the support of an emergency will be subject to this process.</p>
<p>Content</p>	<p>The procedural contents of this JSOP are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expected Behaviours 2. Raising a Concern or Complaint. 3. Escalation of a Complaint 4. Dealing with an Escalated Complaint at Agency Command Level 5. Dealing with Complaint at Human Resource Level <p>The Schedules in this JSOP are: Schedule 1: Complaints Escalation Flow Chart Schedule 2: Considerations for Leaders</p>
<p>Responsibilities</p>	<p>The following personnel (or their equivalents where appropriate) have responsibilities within this procedure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incident Controllers • Agency Commanders • Agency HR Representatives • Agency Chiefs • Emergency Response Coordinator <p>Applicable agencies are required to ensure all their personnel are aware of this JSOP.</p> <p>In some situations, actions may be assigned to a suitably qualified delegate to undertake e.g. an Incident Controller may assign the complaint escalation to their Deputy Incident Controller.</p>
<p>Definitions</p>	<p>Common Emergency Management terms and definitions can be found in EM-COP under Library > Definitions.</p> <p>Within this document, the following definitions apply:</p> <p>Complainant The individual raising a concern or complaint.</p> <p>Respondent The person against whom a complaint is raised.</p>



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Emergency Response Coordinator

As per the State Emergency Management Plan, the Incident, Regional or Municipal Emergency Response Coordinator will usually be the most senior police member present and is responsible for ensuring effective control is established and maintained.

Incident Safety Officer

A Safety Officer is a trained and/or accredited person who reports directly to the Incident Controller on potential and current safety hazards and risks and any safety issues identified at the incident and whose primary location is the ICC.

Local Resolution

The resolution of a complaint at the local workforce level between the parties involved and with the support of Operational Line Managers if required.

Operational Line Manager

The person that an individual reports to in an operational/incident setting.

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PROCEDURE**1. Expected Behaviours**

- 1.1. It is expected that personnel from all agencies working in the multiagency environments will foster a positive, safe and supportive workplace and maintain respectful relationships, including ensuring the environment is free of discrimination, harassment, and bullying.
- 1.2. All teams and individuals working in multiagency environments will act in accordance with and demonstrate their agency's values and conduct related policies and procedures
- 1.3. When working in a multi-agency environment, safety is the responsibility of everyone. When behaviour does not meet expectations there is potential for unsafe environment leading to harm.
- 1.4. Where the behaviour of personnel is not aligned to expectations and/or causing harm to another person, it may be appropriate to seek advice and raise a complaint.

2. Raising a Concern or Complaint.

- 2.1. Concerns about behaviour can be raised by anyone preferably through the incident chain of command or appropriate alternative. Everyone has a responsibility to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all personnel.
- 2.2. Where there is a concern relating to behaviour between personnel from different agencies, advice should be sought from relevant Incident Safety Officer or a complaint raised through the relevant chain of command or HR personnel where possible and appropriate. *Schedule 1: Complaints Escalation Flow Chart* outlines the path of escalation described in this JSOP.

2.3. The operational line managers within the incident chain of command need to support the personnel involved in achieving a resolution locally, where possible and appropriate.

2.3.1. Where the operational line manager in the chain of command is not appropriate to assist in local resolution, the complaint can be raised with the Incident Controller.

2.4. Initial actions that an operational line manager need to ensure take place:

2.4.1. Privacy of all parties needs to be maintained as much as practical. Only share necessary information with essential personnel to deal with the complaint.

2.4.2. Confirm with all parties whether they require any immediate assistance or support to protect their safety, health and wellbeing. This may include utilising their own agency wellbeing mechanisms or other wellbeing services that may be available at the relevant operational tier.

2.4.3. If the individuals are no longer at the incident, then the issue should be escalated to agency command as per Step 2 in *Schedule 1: Complaints Escalation Flow Chart*

2.4.4. Further consideration for managers when dealing with a complaint is available in *Schedule 2: Considerations for Leaders*.

2.4.5. Communicate back with the relevant personnel to notify them of the steps taken.

3. Escalation of a Complaint

3.1. Where local resolution is not achieved or inappropriate to be resolved at this level, then the complaint can be escalated locally (by the complainant or someone on their behalf), to the relevant personnel's tiers of command and control.

3.2. The complainant Agency Commander needs to initiate the liaison with the agency commander(s) of the agency of the other party(s) involved.

4. Dealing with an Escalated Complaint at Agency Command Level

4.1. Agency Commanders should attempt resolution between their personnel in the first instance.

4.2. Agency Commanders for the affected parties are to determine that an issue between personnel from different agencies exists and that local resolution has been unsuccessful.

5. Dealing with Complaint at Human Resource Level

5.1. Where it is not possible to address the complaint, Agency Commander(s) from the involved party(ies) should escalate to HR to resolve.

5.2. Agency Commanders need to ensure that contact details of respective HR representatives are shared and that the agency HR representatives have taken ownership of resolution.

- 5.3. Agency Commander of the complainant is required to notify the Incident Controller (or equivalent) that there is an issue that has been escalated and the actions that have been undertaken.
- 5.4. Agency Commanders will need to keep record of actions taken, this is to be done in line with respective agency procedures, ensuring privacy of the relevant personnel.
- 5.5. If a complaint is not resolved locally and requires the involvement of HR representatives from multiple agencies, it is expected that those HR representatives will work together to resolve the situation using their internal agency procedures.
- 5.6. If at any stage there is unsatisfactory progress, communication or resolution, issues can be raised through internal processes.

SAFETY

Safety, which includes psychological safety and wellbeing, in a multi-agency environment is the responsibility of all personnel.

Agencies are responsible for adhering to their legislative and internal policies, procedures and requirements when dealing with the complaints process.

All parties involved in a complaints process should be provided ongoing support for their health, welfare and safety in the case of a complaint being made.

REFERENCE

Related Documents	<u>Emergency Management Act 2013</u> <u>State Emergency Management Plan</u> <u>JSOP 08.01 – OH&S Incident Reporting and Investigation – Major Emergencies</u> <u>Code of Conduct for Victorian public sector employees</u>
Environment	Nil
REVIEW	
Date Issue	23 October 2023
Date Effective	04 December 2023
Date to be Reviewed	October 2024
Date to Cease	N/A

AUTHORITY

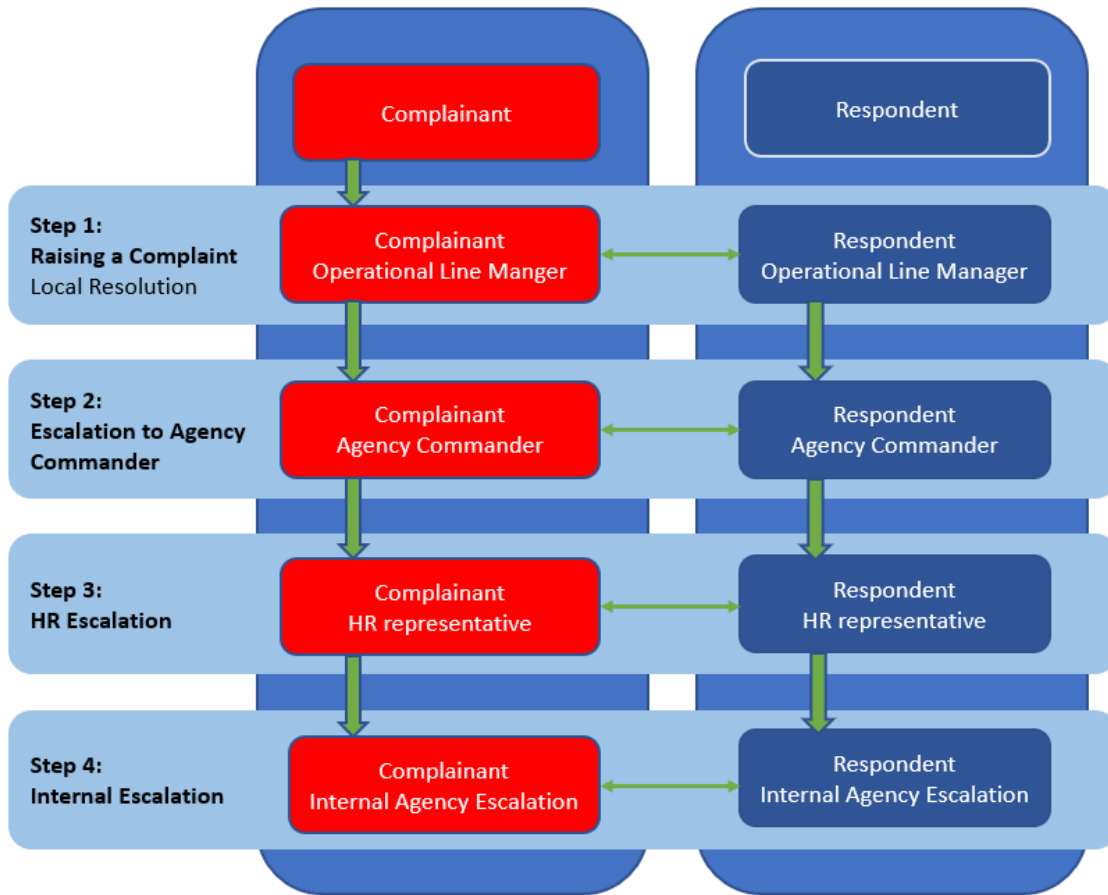
The Emergency Management Commissioner has issued this JSOP under section 50 of the *Emergency Management Act 2013*.

Approved	Signature	Date
Rick Nugent Emergency Management Commissioner	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Endorsed	Signature	Date
Jason Heffernan Chief Officer, CFA	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Chris Hardman Chief Fire Officer, DEECA	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Gavin Freeman Commissioner, FRV	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023
Tim Wiebusch Chief Officer Operations, VICSES	Signed Copy on File at the State Control Centre	23 October 2023

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Schedule 1: Complaints Escalation Flow Chart



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Schedule 2: Considerations for Leaders

The primary consideration during any complaints process should be the health, safety and wellbeing of all parties involved. This will include Complainants, Respondents and any witnesses or people with responsibilities within the complaints procedure. Ensure all parties involved are aware of support available to them e.g. EAP services.

The next consideration should be the importance of privacy for all parties involved in a complaints process. Seek advice from your agency HR representatives on what information can be shared, with whom and how. Confirm what records should be kept and what agency or legislative requirements are expected.

Once immediate safety is ensured, consider the health, safety and wellbeing of all parties whilst the matter is being resolved. This could include changing shift patterns so parties are not working together or temporarily reassigning parties to different tasks or locations. Seek advice from your leadership team or HR representatives to ensure the actions are appropriate.

If it is clear that an issue can not be resolved locally (or it is not appropriate) the responsibility for resolution should be passed to agency HR representatives who have specialist training, experience and subject matter expertise to handle complex complaints situations. Involved parties should liaise with the appropriate HR representatives and the leadership team should provide support to the process and parties involved where appropriate.

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