# Severity Definitions and Escalation Rules Template

# Introduction

Severity definitions and response times are an integral part of service management standard operating procedures (SOPs). The example in this document illustrates how you would integrate guidelines for when to declare a disaster as per a DR Incident Response Plan.

Modify the definitions and timelines as appropriate for your environment, and incorporate this into your service management SOP (for an example of a service management SOP, see Info-Tech’s *Incident and Service Management Procedures - Service Desk Example*).

# Example Severity Definitions and Escalation Rules Template

Below are example severity definitions and escalation rules for:

* **Gold Systems** (Tier 1 or Mission-Critical Systems; e.g. an online catalog that directly and significantly impacts revenue)
* **Silver Systems** (Tier 2 - Important to daily operations, but not mission critical; e.g. Exchange Server)
* **Bronze Systems** (Tier 3 - Serve a function, but are not important to daily operations; e.g. archival system)

**Note:** Where the descriptions differ for Gold, Silver, and Bronze, this is indicated by color-coding.

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| **Severity** | **Description** | **Examples** | **Time to Respond\*** | **Time to Escalate\*\*** | **Initiate failover if not resolved\*\*\*** |
| 0  Disaster Assessment Required  ***(refer to DR Incident Response Plan)*** | * A major event (e.g. fire, natural disaster) * Major infrastructure failure with no workaround | SQL Server failure, mainframe failure, network outage, power outage, etc. | Immediate | Immediate | Up to 2 hours |
| * A major event (e.g. fire, natural disaster) * System outage | Exchange Server failure; network or power outage | Up to 4 hours |
| * A major event (e.g. fire, natural disaster) * System outage | Document archive system failure, network outage, power outage | Up to 24 hours |
| 1  Critical | * Functionality severely restricted * No workaround | Loss of third-party services (e.g. due to VPN down), standalone SPOF servers, etc. | Immediate | Immediate | Up to 4 hours |
| * Little to no functionality with no workaround * Many services or users affected * Regulatory or legal implications | Online quotes service is down, employee internet access, etc. | Up to 8 hours |
|  | N/A - Bronze systems are lower priority, so won’t be given critical status. Status can be as high as urgent, or disaster assessment required if it can’t be resolved, or it’s a clear disaster scenario. | | | |
| 2  Urgent | * Basic functionality with some restrictions * Workaround available * One or more users affected | Orders are going through, but customer database is not being updated | Immediate | Up to 1 hour | Up to 8 hours |
| * Functionality severely restricted * No workaround * Several users affected | Email is impaired; imaging is up, but search is down – can’t advance workflow | Up to 24 hours |
| * Little to no functionality with no workaround * Data corrupted * Many services affected or many users affected * Regulatory or legal implications | Document archive system can’t store or retrieve documents, or retrieved documents appear to be corrupted | Up to 48 hours |
| 3  Normal | * Minor problem * Functionality unaffected * Cosmetic or an annoyance | Error messages, but no loss of functionality | Immediate | Up to 8 hours | Up to 24 hours |
| * Basic functionality with some restrictions * Workaround available * One or more users affected | Email calendar issues, etc. | Up to 48 hours |
| * Functionality severely restricted * No workaround * Several users affected | Users can’t connect to document archive system | Up to 72 hours |
| 4 Minor |  | N/A - A minor issue on a gold system is at least a 3 - Normal severity | | | |
| * Minor problem * Functionality unaffected * Cosmetic or an annoyance | More spam than usual getting through spam filter, error on log backups | Immediate | Up to 24 hours | Up to 72 hours |
| * Basic functionality with some restrictions * Workaround available * One or more users affected | Document archive system is slow but functional | Up to 5 business days |
| 5 Service Request | * Service requests | Add/Moves/ Changes | Immediate | Varies | N/A |

\* For Gold systems experiencing a Critical, Urgent, or Disaster scenario, alert notification is sent out immediately and on-call technicians are required to respond within the listed timeframes. Otherwise, response times are within regular service desk hours of operation.

\*\* For Severity 0, 1, and 2, if the incident is not resolved before the “Time to Escalate,” refer to your DR Incident Response Plan for disaster assessment procedures.

\*\*\* “Declaring a Disaster” can range from initiating recovery procedures for a single affected system to relocation, depending on the extent of the outage.

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