

**Region 4
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Science and Ecosystem Support Division
Athens, Georgia**

OPERATING PROCEDURE


Title: Complaint Resolution

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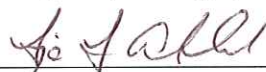
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Revision History

This table shows changes to this controlled document over time. The most recent version is presented in the top row of the table. Previous versions of the document are maintained by the SESD Document Control Coordinator.

History	Effective Date
<p>SESDPROC-020-R1, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R0</p> <p>Title Page: Changed the following: Author from Laura Ackerman to Liza Montalvo; Enforcement and Investigations Branch Chief from Antonio Quinones to Archie Lee; and, Field Quality Manager from Laura Ackerman to Liza Montalvo.</p> <p>Revision History: Changed Field Quality Manager to Document Control Coordinator.</p> <p>Section 1.3: Omitted reference to the H: drive. Changed the Field Quality Manager to the Document Control Coordinator.</p> <p>Section 1.4.4: Added the definition of a valid complaint.</p> <p>Section 2.2: Corrected typographical error in #2 and added control number for complaint evaluation form. Section Chief will now maintain the original complaint evaluation form instead of the copy.</p> <p>Section 2.3: Added last sentence.</p>	<p>July 8, 2010</p>
<p>SESDPROC-020-R1, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, replaces, SESDPROC-020-R0</p> <p>Title Page Changed title for Antonio Quinones from Environmental Investigation Branch to Enforcement and Investigations Branch.</p> <p>Section 2.2, #2 Changed "they" to "this."</p>	<p>November 1, 2007</p>
<p>SESDPROC-020-R0, <i>Complaint Resolution</i>, Original Issue</p>	<p>October 1, 2007</p>

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1 General Information

1.1 Purpose

This document defines the procedure used within the SESD field branches to evaluate and resolve complaints.

1.2 Scope/Application

This procedure applies to all work conducted under the scope of the SESD field branches quality management system.

1.3 Documentation/Verification

This procedure was prepared by persons deemed technically competent by SESD management, based on their knowledge, skills and abilities. The official copy of this procedure resides on the SESD local area network (LAN). The Document Control Coordinator (DCC) is responsible for ensuring the most recent version of the procedure is placed on the LAN and for maintaining records of review conducted prior to its issuance.

1.4 Definitions

1.4.1 Complaint

Written or verbal notification that a specified aspect of SESD's operation regarding the field branches quality system or environmental data collection or analysis is alleged to be unsatisfactory.

1.4.2 Internal Complaint

Complaint received from within SESD.

1.4.3 External Complaint

Complaint received from and individual or organization outside of SESD.

1.4.4 Valid Complaint

For purposes of this operating procedure, a complaint that is associated with the field branches quality system or environmental data collection or analysis.

1.5 References

Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026, most recent version)

SESD Operating Procedure for Corrective Action (SESDPROC-009, most recent version)

SESD Operating Procedure for Preventive Action and Quality Improvement (SESDPROC-017, most recent version)

2 Methodology

2.1 General

This procedure describes how complaints will be addressed within the SESD field branches. Complaints may originate from internal or external sources. Personnel in the field branches should notify the appropriate Section Chief of issues concerning internal complaints associated with the field branches quality system or technical operations. If external complaints are received by staff members within the field branches, the complaints should be forwarded to the appropriate Section Chief.

2.2 Complaint Resolution

Upon receipt, all complaints will be handled in the following manner:

1. The Section Chief will contact the source of the complaint in order to discuss the details of the relevant issue and to determine if the complaint is valid.
2. If the Section Chief determines the complaint is not valid, this will be noted on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form (SESDFORM-026) and the Section Chief will maintain the original form.
3. If the Section Chief determines the complaint is valid, the Field Quality Manager (FQM) will be consulted to determine if the complaint is a nonconformance within the SESD Field Branches Quality System or technical operations.
4. If a valid complaint is not deemed a nonconformance, the Section Chief and FQM will determine if the issue is a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement. If the complaint is a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement, the issue will be addressed in accordance with the SESD Operating Procedure for Preventive Action and Quality Improvement (SESDFORM-017). If the complaint is not a candidate for a preventive action or quality improvement, the Section Chief will work with the source of the complaint to resolve the issue. The resolution will be noted on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form and the Section Chief will maintain the original form.
5. If a valid complaint is deemed a nonconformance, the FQM will initiate a corrective action in accordance with the SESD Operating Procedure for Corrective Action (SESDFORM-009).

Figure 1 contains a flow chart for complaint resolution as described above.

2.3 Records

All aspects of complaint receipt, evaluation, and resolution will be noted on the SESD Complaint Evaluation Form by the Section Chiefs and the Section Chiefs will maintain the original copy of the form for all complaints. If a complaint is deemed to be a candidate for preventive action or

quality improvement or nonconformance, the Section Chief will provide a copy of the form to the FQM. In January of each year, the Section Chiefs will provide the FQM a summary report of all complaints received during the previous calendar year. If no complaints are received, the Section Chiefs will inform the FQM in writing via electronic transmission or other appropriate correspondence.

Figure 1: Complaint Resolution Flowchart

