

## **Whistle Blower Policy & Vigil Mechanism**

### **1. Preface**

This Whistle Blower Policy ("the Policy") has been formulated with a view to provide a mechanism for employees of the Company to raise concerns on any violations of legal or regulatory requirements, incorrect or misrepresentation of any financial statements and reports, etc.

As per Section 177 (9) of the Companies Act, 2013 mandates the following classes of companies to constitute a vigil mechanism-

- Every listed company;
- Every other company which accepts deposits from the public;
- Every company which has borrowed money from banks and public- financial institutions in excess of Rs. 50crores.

Further, Regulation 22 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 requires a listed entity to formulate a vigil mechanism for Directors and employees to report genuine concerns. The vigil mechanism shall provide for adequate safeguards against victimization of director(s) or employee(s) or any other person who avails the mechanism and also provide for direct access to the chairperson of the Audit Committee in appropriate or exceptional cases.

### **2. Objective**

The Company is committed to adhere to the highest standards of ethical, moral and legal conduct of business operations. To maintain these standards, the Company encourages its employees who have concerns about suspected misconduct to come forward and express these concerns without fear of punishment or unfair treatment. This Policy aims to provide an avenue for employees to raise concerns on any violations of legal or regulatory requirements, incorrect or misrepresentation of any financial statements and reports, etc..

### **3. Definitions**

The definitions of some of the key terms used in this Policy are given below.

- a. "Audit Committee" means the Audit Committee of Directors constituted by the Board of Directors of the Company in accordance with Section 177 of the Companies Act, 2013 and read with Regulation 18 of the SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015.
- b. "Employee" means every employee of the Company (whether working in India or abroad), including the directors in the employment of the Company.
- c. "Director" means every Director of the Company, past or present.

e. “Investigators” mean those persons authorized, appointed, consulted or approached by the Committee and include the auditors of the Company and the police.

f. “Protected Disclosure” means any communication made in good faith that discloses or demonstrates information that may evidence unethical or improper activity.

g. “Subject” means a person against or in relation to whom a Protected Disclosure has been made or evidence gathered during the course of an investigation.

h. “Whistleblower” means an Employee or director making a Protected Disclosure under this Policy.

i. “Whistle Officer” or “Whistle Committee” or “Committee” means an officer or Committee of persons who is/are nominated/ appointed to conduct detailed investigation of the disclosure received from the whistle blower and recommend disciplinary action.

#### **4. Scope**

Various stakeholders of the Company are eligible to make Protected Disclosures under the Policy. These stakeholders may fall into any of the following broad categories:

- Employees of the Company
- Employees of other agencies deployed for the Company’s activities, whether working from any of the Company’s offices or any other location
- Contractors, vendors, suppliers or agencies (or any of their employees) providing any material or service to the Company
- Customers of the Company
- Any other person having an association with the Company

A person belonging to any of the above-mentioned categories can avail of the channel provided by this Policy for raising an issue covered under this Policy.

The Policy covers malpractices and events which have taken place/ suspected to take place involving:

1. Abuse of authority
2. Breach of contract
3. Negligence causing substantial and specific danger to public health and safety
4. Manipulation of company data/records
5. Financial irregularities, including fraud or suspected fraud or Deficiencies in Internal Control and check or deliberate error in preparations of Financial Statements or Misrepresentation of financial reports
6. Any unlawful act whether Criminal/ Civil
7. Pilferage of confidential/propriety information
8. Deliberate violation of law/regulation
9. Wastage / misappropriation of company funds/assets
10. Bribery or corruption

11. Sexual Harassment
12. Retaliation
13. Breach of IT Security and data privacy
14. Social Media Misuse
15. Breach of Company Policy or failure to implement or comply with any approved Company Policy

The Policy should not be used in place of the Company's operational grievance procedures or be a route for raising malicious or unfounded allegations against colleagues.

## **5. GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

To ensure that this Policy is adhered to, and to assure that the concern will be acted upon seriously, the Company will:

1. Ensure that the Whistle blower and/or the person processing the Protected Disclosure is not victimized for doing so
2. Treat victimization as a serious matter, including initiating disciplinary action on person/(s) indulging in victimization
3. Ensure complete confidentiality
4. Not attempt to conceal evidence of the Protected Disclosure
5. Take disciplinary action, if any one destroys or conceals evidence of the Protected Disclosure made/to be made
6. Provide an opportunity of being heard to the persons involved especially to the Subject

## **6. Disqualifications**

a. While it will be ensured that genuine Whistleblowers are accorded complete protection from any kind of unfair treatment as herein set out, any abuse of this protection will warrant disciplinary action.

b. Protection under this Policy would not mean protection from disciplinary action arising out of false or bogus allegations made by a Whistleblower knowing it to be false or bogus or with a *malafide* intention.

c. Whistleblowers, who make three or more Protected Disclosures, which have been subsequently found to be *malafide*, frivolous, baseless, malicious, or reported otherwise than in good faith, will be disqualified from reporting further Protected Disclosures under this Policy. In respect of such Whistleblowers, the Company/Audit Committee would reserve its right to take/recommend appropriate disciplinary action.

## **7. Investigation**

a. All Protected Disclosures reported under this Policy will be thoroughly investigated by the Chairman of the Audit Committee of the Company who will investigate / oversee the investigations under the authorization of the Audit Committee. If any member of the Audit Committee has a conflict of interest in any given case, then he/she should recuse

himself/herself and the other members of the Audit Committee should deal with the matter on hand. In case where a company is not required to constitute an Audit Committee, then the Board of directors shall nominate a director to play the role of Audit Committee for the purpose of vigil mechanism to whom other directors and employees may report their concerns.

b. The Chairman of the Audit Committee may at his/her discretion, consider involving any Investigators for the purpose of investigation.

c. The decision to conduct an investigation taken by the Chairman of the Audit Committee is by itself not an accusation and is to be treated as a neutral fact-finding process. The outcome of the investigation may not support the conclusion of the Whistleblower that an improper or unethical act was committed.

d. The identity of a Subject will be kept confidential to the extent possible given the legitimate needs of law and the investigation.

e. Subjects will normally be informed of the allegations at the outset of a formal investigation and have opportunities for providing their inputs during the investigation.

f. Subjects shall have a duty to co-operate with the Chairman of the Audit Committee or any of the Investigators during investigation to the extent that such co-operation will not compromise self-incrimination protections available under the applicable laws.

g. Subjects have a right to consult with a person or persons of their choice, other than the Investigators and/or members of the Audit Committee and/or the Whistleblower. Subjects shall be free at any time to engage counsel at their own cost to represent them in the investigation proceedings.

h. Subjects have a responsibility not to interfere with the investigation. Evidence shall not be withheld, destroyed or tampered with, and witnesses shall not be influenced, coached, threatened or intimidated by the Subjects.

i. Unless there are compelling reasons not to do so, Subjects will be given the opportunity to respond to material findings contained in an investigation report. No allegation of wrongdoing against a Subject shall be considered as maintainable unless there is good evidence in support of the allegation.

j. Subjects have a right to be informed of the outcome of the investigation. If allegations are not sustained, the Subject should be consulted as to whether public disclosure of the investigation results would be in the best interest of the Subject and the Company.

k. The investigation shall be completed normally within 45 days of the receipt of the Protected Disclosure

## **8. Protection**

- a. No unfair treatment will be meted out to a Whistleblower by virtue of his/her having reported a Protected Disclosure under this Policy. The Company, as a policy, condemns any kind of discrimination, harassment, victimization or any other unfair employment practice being adopted against Whistleblowers. Complete protection will, therefore, be given to Whistleblowers against any unfair practice like retaliation, threat or intimidation of termination/suspension of service, disciplinary action, transfer, demotion, refusal of promotion, or the like including any direct or indirect use of authority to obstruct the Whistleblower's right to continue to perform his/her duties/functions including making further Protected Disclosure. The Company will take steps to minimize difficulties, which the Whistleblower may experience as a result of making the Protected Disclosure. Thus, if the Whistleblower is required to give evidence in criminal or disciplinary proceedings, the Company will arrange for the Whistleblower to receive advice about the procedure, etc.
- b. A Whistleblower may report any violation of the above clause to the Chairman of the Audit Committee, who shall investigate into the same and recommend suitable action to the management.
- c. The identity of the Whistleblower shall be kept confidential to the extent possible and permitted under law. Whistleblowers are cautioned that their identity may become known for reasons outside the control of the Audit Committee (e.g. during investigations carried out by Investigators).
- d. Any other Employee or Director assisting in the said investigation shall also be protected to the same extent as the Whistleblower.

## **9. Investigators**

- a. Investigators are required to conduct a process towards fact-finding and analysis. Investigators shall derive their authority and access rights from the Committee when acting within the course and scope of their investigation.
- b. Technical and other resources may be drawn upon as necessary to augment the investigation. All Investigators shall be independent and unbiased both in fact and as perceived. Investigators have a duty of fairness, objectivity, thoroughness, ethical behavior, and observance of legal and professional standards.
- c. Investigations will be launched only after a preliminary review which establishes that:
  - i. the alleged act constitutes an improper or unethical activity or conduct, and
  - ii. either the allegation is supported by information specific enough to be investigated, or matters that do not meet this standard may be worthy of management review, but investigation itself should not be undertaken as an investigation of an improper or unethical activity.

## **10. Decision**

If an investigation leads the Audit Committee to conclude that an improper or unethical act has been committed, the Audit Committee shall recommend to the management of the Company to take such disciplinary or corrective action as the Committee deems fit. It is clarified that any disciplinary or corrective action initiated against the Subject as a result of the findings of an investigation pursuant to this Policy shall adhere to the applicable personnel or staff conduct and disciplinary procedures.

## **11. Reporting**

The Investigator shall submit a report to the Audit Committee on a regular basis about all Protected Disclosures referred to him/her since the last report together with the results of investigations, if any.

## **12. Retention of documents**

All Protected Disclosures in writing or documented along with the results of investigation relating thereto shall be retained by the Company for a minimum period of seven years.

## **13. Amendment**

The Company reserves its right to amend or modify this Policy in whole or in part, at any time without assigning any reason whatsoever. However, no such amendment or modification will be binding on the Employees and Directors unless the same is notified to the Employees and Directors in writing.