

Complaint acknowledgment email template

Acknowledge a workplace complaint promptly, explain the process, and confirm protection from retaliation.

Updated October 15, 2026. Written and reviewed by the HRTally Research Team.

When to use this template

When an employee raises a complaint about harassment, discrimination, safety, pay, or another workplace concern, the first response sets the tone for everything after. Acknowledge it quickly, thank them for coming forward, explain what happens next, and make clear that retaliation isn't allowed. Don't make promises about outcomes or absolute confidentiality.

The acknowledgment isn't the place to judge the complaint or ask detailed questions. That happens in the intake conversation and the investigation. Our workplace harassment prevention guide covers how to investigate, and HR case management tools keep a confidential record.

Version 1: Formal complaint received

SUBJECT We received your concern

Hi [Employee first name],

Thank you for bringing your concern to us on [Date]. I know raising an issue like this isn't easy, and I want you to know we take it seriously.

What happens next:

- I would like to meet with you by [Date] to hear more. Please let me know a time that works, or if you would prefer to meet somewhere other than the office.
- We will look into the concern promptly and fairly. That may include speaking with others who have relevant information.
- We will share information only with people who need it to look into and address the concern.
- We will let you know when the review is complete, and what we can share about the outcome.

Retaliation against anyone for raising a concern in good faith, or for taking part in a review, is against our policy and the law. If you experience anything that feels like retaliation, tell me right away.

If you need support in the meantime, our employee assistance program is available at [Phone and link].

[HR contact name]

[Title], [Company]

[Phone]

Version 2: Concern raised through a manager

SUBJECT Following up on the concern you raised

Hi [Employee first name],

[Manager name] let me know that you raised a concern about [general topic]. Thank you for speaking up. I'm the HR contact who will be looking into it.

Can we meet on [Date options]? It will take about 45 minutes. You are welcome to bring any notes, messages, or documents that might help.

You are protected from retaliation for raising this concern. If you have any worries about that, or anything else, call me directly at [Phone].

[HR contact name]

Subject lines to try

- We received your concern
- Following up on the concern you raised
- Next steps on your report
- Thank you for speaking up
- Your concern: what happens next

How to personalize it

- Respond within one business day.
- Thank the employee for coming forward.
- Explain the process and timeline in simple terms.
- State the protection from retaliation plainly.

Mistakes to avoid

- Promising complete confidentiality.
- Judging the complaint or its credibility in writing.
- Telling the employee not to discuss the matter with anyone at all.
- Copying the person complained about or their friends.

| Legal and compliance notes

Title VII, the ADA, the ADEA, and many other laws prohibit retaliation against employees who complain about discrimination or harassment, and retaliation is the most frequently alleged basis in EEOC charges. The EEOC's 2024 harassment guidance says an employer's prompt and adequate response is central to its defense. Be careful with confidentiality instructions. The NLRB has found blanket rules forbidding employees from discussing investigations can violate the NLRA, so ask for discretion and explain why rather than issuing a broad gag order.

| When to send it

Within one business day of receiving the complaint, and immediately if there's a safety concern or ongoing harassment. Take interim steps, such as schedule changes, without disadvantaging the person who complained.

| Before you hit send

- HR or counsel reviewed the message if discipline or a complaint is involved.
- Facts are stated with dates, without opinions or labels.
- Protected leave or a recent complaint plays no part in the action described.
- Any request for discretion is narrow and explained, not a blanket ban.
- A copy is saved to the employee file or the case record.

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