

# Engineering Ethics

## **Canon 1, NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers: “Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public”**

4 Nov 2020

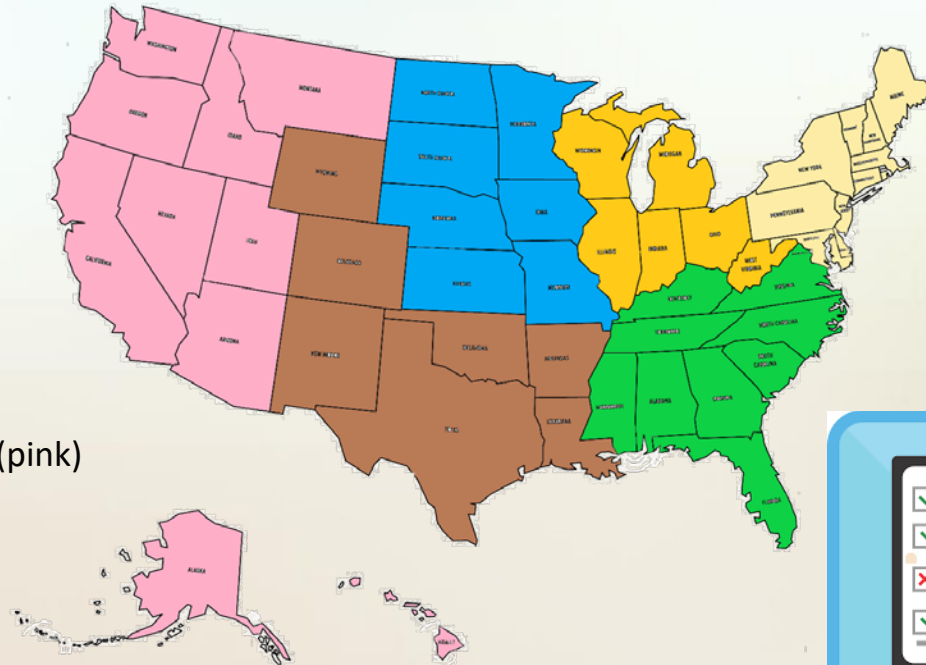
NSPE Board of Ethical Review  
National Society of Professional Engineers  
Alexandria, Virginia

# Meet our Webinar Attendees

## Sample Polling Question “A”

My engineering work is principally within the following NSPE Administrative Region:

- A. Northeast (beige)
- B. Southeast (green)
- C. Central (gold)
- D. North Central (blue)
- E. Southwest (brown)
- F. Western & Pacific (pink)



# Meet our NSPE BER Speakers



**Mark Dubbin, PE, FPE, M. NSPE**  
Las Cruces, NM



**Jeffrey H. Greenfield, Ph.D., P.E., BCEE, F. NSPE**  
Pompano Beach, FL



**David Kish, Ph.D., P.E., M. NSPE**  
West Lafayette, IN



**William D. Lawson, P.E., Ph.D., F. NSPE**  
Lubbock, TX

# Favorite Ethics Quote

Mark Dubbin

“The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right...”

– **Henry David Thoreau**  
(1817-1862)  
*American naturalist, essayist,  
poet and philosopher*

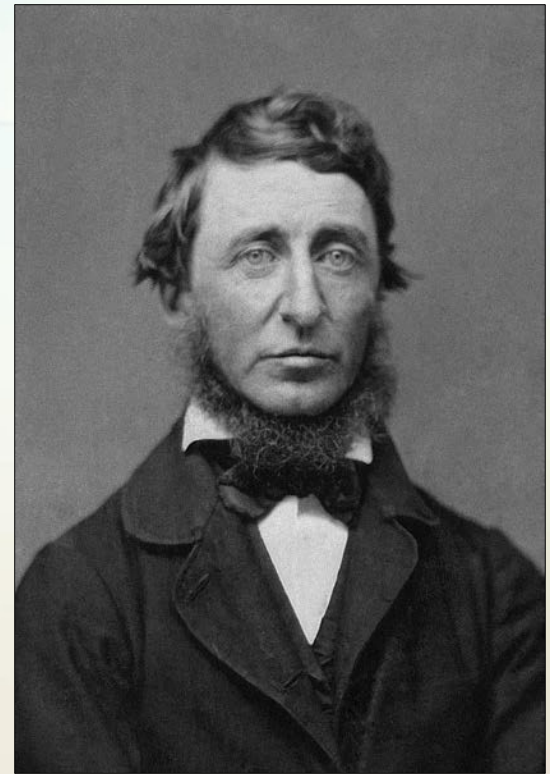


Image: Wikipedia, Public Domain

# Favorite Ethics Quote

## Jeff Greenfield

"In law a man is guilty when he violates the rights of others. In ethics he is guilty if he only thinks of doing so."

– **Immanuel Kant**

(1724-1804)

*German philosopher and  
Enlightenment thinker*



*Image: Wikipedia, Public Domain*

# Favorite Ethics Quote

Dave Kish

“Always do right. This will gratify some people and astonish the rest.”

– **Mark Twain**

(1835-1910)

*American writer, humorist,  
entrepreneur, publisher and lecturer*

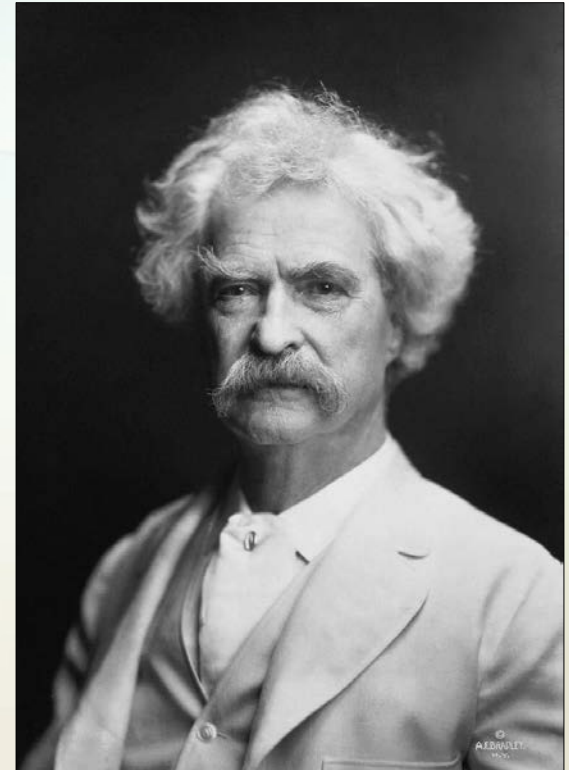


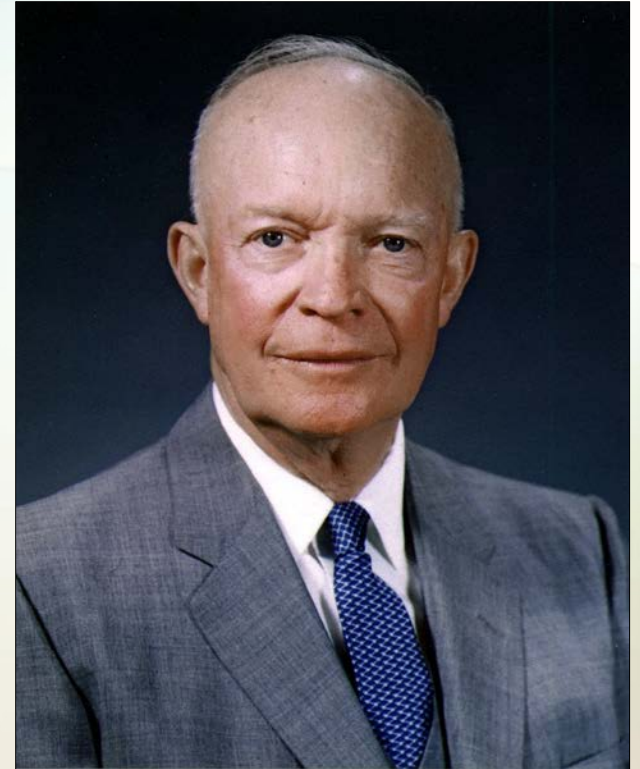
Image: Wikipedia, Public Domain

# Favorite Ethics Quote

## Bill Lawson

“No man can always be right, so  
the struggle is to do one’s best  
to keep the brain and  
conscience clear;  
Never to be swayed by unworthy  
motives or inconsequential  
reasons,  
But to strive to unearth the basic  
factors involved  
And then do one’s duty.”

– **Dwight D. Eisenhower**  
(1890-1969)  
*General of the Army and  
34<sup>th</sup> President of the United States*



*Image: Wikipedia, Public Domain*

# NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers

## Sample Polling Question “B”

In what year was the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers created?

- A. 1914
- B. 1934
- C. 1946
- D. 1964

**NSPE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS**

### Code of Ethics for Engineers

**Preamble**  
Engineering is an important and learned profession. As members of this profession, engineers are expected to exhibit the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Engineering has a direct and vital impact on the quality of life for all people. Accordingly, the services provided by engineers require honesty, impartiality, fairness, and equity and must be dedicated to the protection of the public health, safety, and welfare. Engineers must perform under a standard of professional behavior that requires adherence to the highest principles of ethics and conduct.

**I. Fundamental Canons**  
Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall:  
1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public;  
2. Perform services only in areas of their competence;  
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner;  
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees;  
5. Avoid deceptive acts;  
6. Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.

**II. Rules of Practice**  
**1. Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.**  
a. If an engineer's judgment is overruled under circumstances that endanger life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and notify other authority as may be appropriate.  
b. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable standards.  
c. Engineers shall not seal, sign, date, or vouch for information without the prior consent of the client or employer except as authorized or required by law or this code.  
d. Engineers shall not permit the use of their name or firm that they believe to be fraudulent or dishonest.  
e. Engineers shall not seal or label the unlawful practice of engineering by a person or firm.  
f. Engineers having knowledge of any alleged violation of this code shall report thereon to appropriate professional bodies and, when relevant, also to public authorities, and cooperate with the proper authorities in furnishing such information or assistance as may be required.

**2. Engineers shall perform services only in the areas of their competence.**  
a. Engineers shall undertake assignments only when qualified by education or experience in the specific technical fields involved.  
b. Engineers shall not affix their signature to any plans or documents bearing with subject matter in which they lack competence, nor to any plan or document not prepared under their direction and control.  
c. Engineers may accept assignments and assume responsibility for coordination of an entire project and sign and seal the engineering documents for the entire project, provided that each technical segment is signed and sealed only by the qualified engineer who prepared the segment.

**3. Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.**  
a. Engineers shall be objective and truthful in professional reports, statements, or testimony. They shall include all relevant and pertinent information in such reports, statements, or testimony, which should bear the date indicating when it was current.  
b. Engineers may express publicly technical opinions that are founded upon knowledge of the facts and conditions in the subject matter.  
c. Engineers shall issue no statements, opinions, or judgments on technical matters that are requested or paid for by interested parties, unless they have prepared their comments by explicitly identifying the interested parties on whose behalf they are speaking, and by revealing the existence of any interest the engineers may have in the matter.

**4. Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.**  
a. Engineers shall disclose all known or potential conflicts of interest that could influence or appear to influence their judgment or the quality of their services.  
b. Engineers shall not accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one party for services on the same project or for services pertaining to the same project, unless the circumstances are fully disclosed and agreed to by all interested parties.  
c. Engineers shall not solicit or accept financial or other valuable consideration, directly or indirectly, from outside agents in connection with the work for which they are engaged.  
d. Engineers in public service as members, advisors, or employees of a governmental or quasi-governmental body or department shall not participate in decisions with respect to services solicited or provided by them or their organizations or entities in public engineering practice.  
e. Engineers shall not solicit or accept a contract from a governmental body which is a principal or officer of their organization serves as a member.

**5. Engineers shall avoid deceptive acts.**  
a. Engineers shall not deny their qualifications or permit misrepresentation of their or their associates' qualifications. They shall not misrepresent or exaggerate their responsibility or for the subject matter of prior assignments. Disclosures or other qualifications required to the solicitation of employment shall not misrepresent pertinent facts concerning engineers, employees, associates, joint ventures, or past accomplishments.  
b. Engineers shall not offer, give, solicit, or receive, either directly or indirectly, any contribution to influence the award of a contract by public authority, or which may be reasonably construed by the public as having the effect or intent of influencing the award of a contract. They shall not offer any gift or other valuable consideration in order to secure work. They shall not give a commission, kickback, or brokerage fee in order to secure work, except to a bona fide employee or bona fide established commercial or marketing agencies retained by them.

**III. Professional Obligations**  
**1. Engineers shall be guided in all their relations by the highest standards of honesty and integrity.**  
a. Engineers shall acknowledge their errors and shall not distort or alter the facts.  
b. Engineers shall advise their clients or employers when they believe a project will not be successful.  
c. Engineers shall not accept outside employment that interferes with their regular work or interest. Before accepting any outside engineering employment, they will notify their employer.  
d. Engineers shall not attempt to attract an engineer from another employer by false or misleading statements.  
e. Engineers shall not promote their own interest at the expense of the integrity and interests of the profession.  
f. Engineers shall treat all persons with dignity, respect, fairness, and without discrimination.

**2. Engineers shall at all times strive to serve the public interest.**  
a. Engineers are encouraged to participate in civic affairs; serve as advisors for public works; and work for the advancement of the safety, health and well-being of their community.  
b. Engineers shall not compromise, sign, or seal plans and/or specifications that are not in conformity with applicable engineering standards, if the client or employer insists on such unprofessional conduct. They shall notify the proper authorities and withdraw from further service on the project.  
c. Engineers are encouraged to extend public knowledge and appreciation of engineering and its achievement.  
d. Engineers are encouraged to adhere to the principle of sustainable development in order to protect the environment for future generations.  
e. Engineers shall continue their professional development throughout their careers and should keep current in their specialty fields by engaging in professional practice, participating in continuing education courses, reading in the technical literature, and attending professional meetings and seminars.

3420 HIND STREET, ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22304-2174 • 800-285-NSPE (6773) • LEGAL@NSPE.ORG • WWW.NSPE.ORG • PUBLICATION DATE: AS REVISED JULY 2019 • PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS, ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.





# Learning Objectives

*Upon completion of this webinar, learners will be able to:*

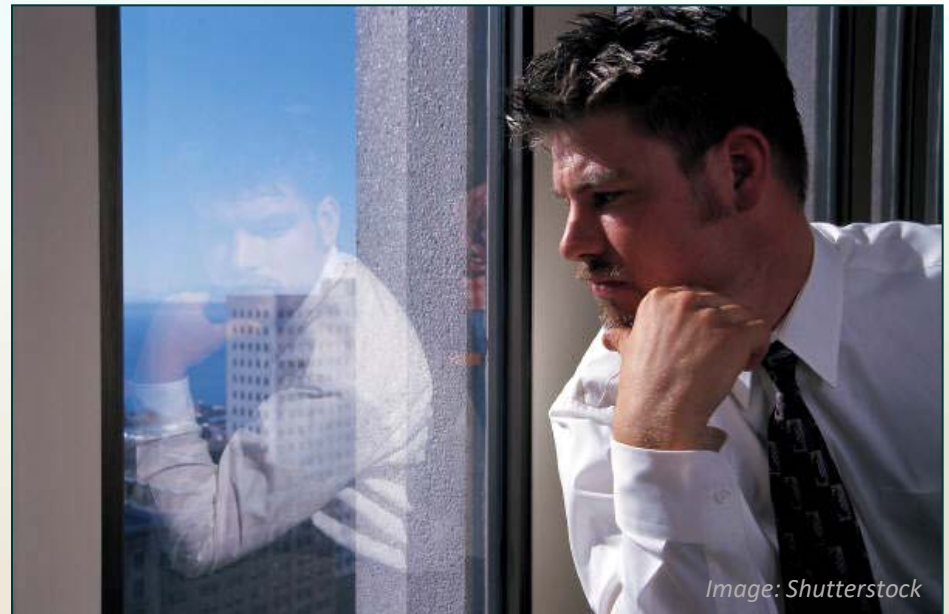
1. Identify pertinent guidance from the NSPE Code of Ethics relative to professional conduct and ethics for professional engineers
2. Interpret and apply guidance relative to analyzing typical ethical dilemmas
3. Demonstrate ethical problem solving skills for selected engineering situations.

# A Suggested Course of Action when Facing an Ethical Dilemma

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## ***How should you handle an ethical dilemma?***

- This series of slides presents a five-step process to help you work through ethical problems, the central goal being ethical attitudes and actions.



# STEP 1:

Gather the information needed to make a good decision.

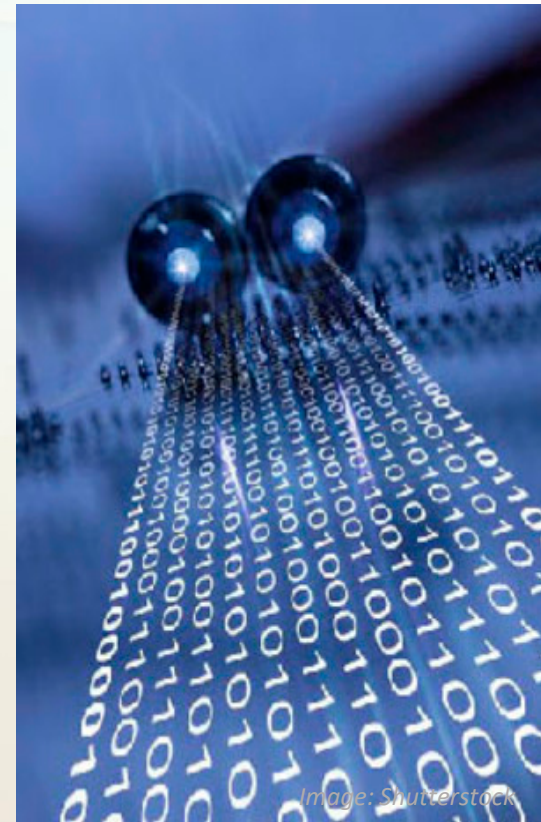


- Get the facts. Make sure you have accurate and complete information regarding the situation.
- Distinguish between what you know from what is uncertain or is based on hearsay.
- Identify the stakeholders. Make a list of every individual, group or organization that has something significant to gain or lose in the resolution of the problem, noting what is at stake for them and the ethical standards that apply to each one.

# STEP 2:

Determine what ethical standards apply to the situation.

- Review ethics guidance relative to the issue.
- If you are a licensed professional, check the ethics provisions of your licensure law.
- Use other resources available to you including your peers and supervisors.



*Image: Shutterstock*

# STEP 3:

Clarify the key concepts in the ethical dilemma.

- The idea is to reduce the problem to its core ethical issues. An ethical dilemma typically takes the form of one good thing (e.g., keeping your promises) versus another good thing (e.g., preventing harm).
- Both of these – keeping promises and preventing harm – are important ethical obligations.
- This is no easy dilemma to solve

# STEP 4:

## Prepare to solve the problem.

- Develop at least two possible alternative solutions.
- Systematically evaluate the alternatives using the ethical standards identified, the interests of the major stakeholders in the situation, and related factors.
- Weigh the costs of each possible solution to each stakeholder. The process of evaluation may turn up new questions and problems requiring further investigation.
- Choose the best alternative, using your judgment to balance the competing ethical obligations and goals.
- Develop a strategy to put your solution into action.

# STEP 5:

## Act!

The previous steps are directed toward helping you with this critical aspect of ethical problem solving.

However, once you know the right thing to do, the other critical aspect is to actually DO THE RIGHT THING! For many of us, this is the hard part.

Here, moral courage comes into play. If left unattended, ethical problems rarely solve themselves. The key is to take well-considered action. Ultimately, you must do this, relying on the assistance of your coworkers, supervisors, friends and others.

***“Run towards the roar...”***





# Engineering Ethics

NSPE BER members will review selected engineering ethics cases having to do with **holding paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public**. Polling questions and opportunity for Q&A will allow opportunities for audience interaction.

# NSPE BER Case: 18-9



**Public Health and Safety—  
Building Codes to Address  
Environmental Risk**

## Case: 18-9

### *Public Health and Safety—Building Codes to Address Environmental Risk*

#### **Facts:**

Engineer A is an engineer in private practice. Engineer A is retained by Client A, a developer, to perform hydrodynamic modeling and coastal risk assessment in connection with potential climate change and sea level rise for a residential development project near a coastal area. The geographic area in which Client A is planning to build the project currently has no building code in place.



## Case: 18-9

### *Public Health and Safety—Building Codes to Address Environmental Risk*

#### **Facts:**

Based on newly released information as well as a recently developed algorithm that includes newly identified historic weather data, Engineer A believes the residential development project should be built to a 100-year projected storm surge elevation, due to public safety risks even at lower projections of future surge level rise. Because of the increased cost, Owner refuses to agree that the residential development project be built to a 100-year projection storm surge elevation.



Case: 18-9

*Public Health and Safety—Building Codes to Address Environmental Risk*

**Question:**

What are Engineer A's obligations under the circumstances?



# Case: 18-9

## Public Health and Safety—Building Codes to Address Environmental Risk

### Section I.1, II.1. – NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.*

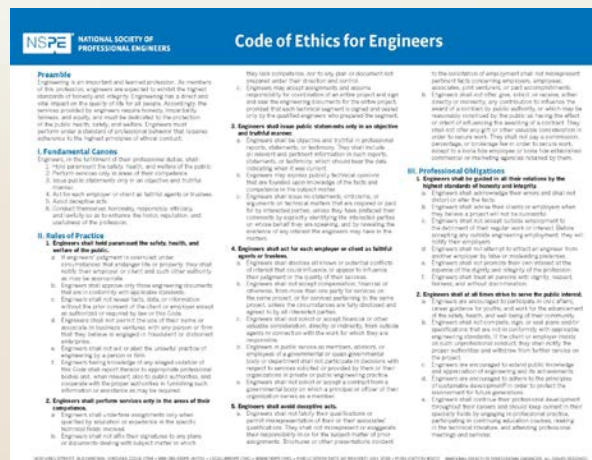
The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title 'Code of Ethics for Engineers'. The page is divided into several sections: 'Preamble', 'Fundamental Canons', 'Rules of Practice', and 'Professional Obligations'. Each section contains specific ethical guidelines for engineers. The text is presented in a clean, professional layout with clear headings and bullet points.

# Case: 18-9

## Public Health and Safety—Building Codes to Address Environmental Risk

### Section II.1.a. – NSPE Code of Ethics

*If engineers' judgment is overruled under circumstances that endanger life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.*



The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title "Code of Ethics for Engineers". The page is divided into several sections: "Preamble", "Fundamental Canons", "Rules of Practice", and "Professional Obligations". The "Fundamental Canons" section includes the text: "Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public." The "Rules of Practice" section includes the text: "Engineers shall not accept or alter the public practice of engineering by themselves or their employees or agents." The "Professional Obligations" section includes the text: "Engineers shall not engage in any business or activity that reflects unfavorably on the profession or that endangers the public interest." The page also contains a footer with contact information for NSPE.





### Section III.1.b. – NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall advise their clients or employers when they believe a project will not be successful*

**NSPE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS** Code of Ethics for Engineers

**Preamble**  
Engineering is an important and learned profession. Its members are entrusted with the safety, health, and welfare of the public. Engineers are expected to exercise the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Engineering that is not done with integrity is not only a disservice to the public, but it is also a disservice to the profession. Engineers shall be held to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Engineers shall be held to the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Engineers shall be held to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

**I. Fundamental Canons**  
Engineers, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, shall:  
1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.  
2. Perform services only in areas of their competence.  
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.  
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.  
5. Avoid conflicts of interest.  
6. Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and confidence of the profession.  
7. Support the national practice of engineering.  
8. Uphold and advance the honor, reputation, and confidence of the profession.

**II. Rules of Practice**  
1. **Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.**  
a. When an assignment is accepted under circumstances that challenge life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and seek other authority as may be appropriate.  
b. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable laws.  
c. Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information which are confidential to their client or any other person without the authorization of the client.  
d. Engineers shall not practice on the basis of their name or reputation in business contracts with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities.  
e. Engineers shall not act or abstain the unlawful practice of engineering by deception or fraud.  
f. Engineers shall not be a party to or assist in the preparation of false or misleading data, reports, or drawings.  
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**III. Professional Obligations**  
1. **Engineers shall be faithful to their employers or clients.**  
a. Engineers shall not accept compensation from anyone other than their employer or client for services rendered.  
b. Engineers shall not accept compensation from anyone other than their employer or client for services rendered.  
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z. Engineers shall not accept compensation from anyone other than their employer or client for services rendered.

### Section III.2.d. – NSPE Code of Ethics

Engineers are encouraged to adhere to the principles of sustainable development in order to protect the environment for future generations

**NSPE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS** Code of Ethics for Engineers

**Preamble**  
Engineering is an important and learned profession. Its members, by their activities, are engaged in serving the public interest, the health, safety, and welfare of the community. It is the duty of the engineer to accept the highest standards of honesty and integrity. Engineering is a profession and its members are held to the same standards of conduct as those of the legal, medical, and other learned professions. Engineers must always act in a manner that is consistent with the public interest, the health, safety, and welfare of the community. Engineers must not engage in any activity that is likely to reflect unfavorably on the profession or the public interest.

**I. Fundamental Canons**  
Engineers, in the interest of the public health, safety, and welfare, shall:  
1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.  
2. Perform services only in areas of their competence.  
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.  
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.  
5. Avoid conflicts of interest.  
6. Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and confidence of the profession.  
7. Maintain their professional integrity.  
8. Uphold and defend the honor, reputation, and confidence of the profession.

**II. Rules of Practice**  
1. **Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.**  
a. When an assignment is accepted under circumstances that challenge life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.  
b. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable laws.  
c. Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information which are confidential to their client or any law that would be a detriment to the client.  
d. Engineers shall not practice the sale of their name or reputation in business dealings with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities.  
e. Engineers shall not act or omit the willful practice of engineering in violation of law.  
f. Engineers shall not engage in any engineering or architectural work that is not within the scope of their professional license or registration, and shall cooperate with the proper authorities in limiting such activities or withdrawing as may be required.  
2. **Engineers shall perform services only in areas of their competence.**  
a. Engineers shall not perform assignments unless they have the education or experience in the specialty. b. Engineers shall not allow their signatures to any plans or documents dealing with subject matter in which they have no competence, nor to any plan or document not prepared under their direction and control.  
c. Engineers may not accept assignments that require responsibility for construction of an entire project and sign and seal the plans for such projects unless they are registered as professional engineers in the jurisdiction in which the project is to be constructed.  
d. Engineers shall be objective and truthful in professional reports, statements, or testimony. They shall indicate in writing when they are not an expert or when their statements or testimony are based on assumptions or hypothetical facts not known to them.  
e. Engineers shall not engage in unauthorized practice of engineering or architecture.  
f. Engineers shall not accept compensation for engineering or architectural services from anyone other than their employer or client.  
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**III. Professional Obligations**  
1. **Engineers shall be faithful to all their relations by the highest standards of integrity and ability.**  
a. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion.  
b. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, or religion in the selection of their regular work or special duties.  
c. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
d. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
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v. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
w. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
x. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
y. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.  
z. Engineers shall not engage in engineering work that is likely to be injurious to the health, safety, or welfare of the public.

## **Polling Question #1**

In keeping with their ethical obligation to “keep up” technically, engineers are justified in introducing newly-developed, but not yet codified, knowledge into their analyses and recommendations.

- A. Agree
- B. Disagree
- C. Not Sure



## **Conclusion:**

Engineer A should continue to pursue discussions with Client A to convince Client A of the danger in which future residents, as well as the general public, could be placed, and the potential for significant property and environmental damage. If Client A refuses to agree with Engineer A's design standard, Engineer A should withdraw from the project.



# NSPE BER Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

Image: Shutterstock



Case: 89-7  
*Duty to Report Safety Violations*

**Facts:**

Engineer A is retained to investigate the structural integrity of a 60-year old occupied apartment building which his client is planning to sell. Under the terms of the agreement with the client, the structural report written by Engineer A is to remain confidential. In addition, the client makes clear to Engineer A that the building is being sold "as is" and he is not planning to take any remedial action to repair or renovate any system within the building prior to its sale.



## Case: 89-7

### *Duty to Report Safety Violations*

#### **Facts** *(continued)*:

Engineer A performs several structural tests on the building and determines that the building is structurally sound. However, during the course of providing services, the client confides in Engineer A and informs him that the building contains deficiencies in the electrical and mechanical systems which violate applicable codes and standards. While Engineer A is not an electrical nor mechanical engineer, he does realize those deficiencies could cause injury to the occupants of the building and so informs the client.

In his report, Engineer A makes a brief mention of his conversation with the client concerning the deficiencies; however, in view of the terms of the agreement, Engineer A does not report the safety violations to any third party.



Case: 89-7  
*Duty to Report Safety Violations*

**Question:**

Was it ethical for Engineer A not to report the safety violations to the appropriate public authorities?





# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section I.1. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.*

Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public in the performance of their professional duties

The image shows a document titled "Code of Ethics for Engineers" from the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE). The document is organized into several sections:

- Preamble:** Discusses the honor and benefit of the profession, the engineer's responsibility to society, and the importance of safety, health, and welfare.
- Fundamental Canons:** Lists five basic principles: 1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public; 2. Perform services only in areas of competence; 3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner; 4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees; 5. Avoid conflicts of interest.
- Rules of Practice:** Contains 10 numbered rules covering areas like: 1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public; 2. Avoid conflicts of interest; 3. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable laws; 4. Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information in violation of the confidentiality of the profession; 5. Engineers shall not practice on the basis of their name or reputation in business connections with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities; 6. Engineers shall not act or omit the usual practice of an engineer in a deceptive or false manner; 7. Engineers shall not be influenced by others in the course of their professional duties; 8. Engineers shall not accept or omit work on the basis of their name or reputation in business connections with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities; 9. Engineers shall not accept or omit work on the basis of their name or reputation in business connections with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities; 10. Engineers shall not accept or omit work on the basis of their name or reputation in business connections with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities.
- Professional Obligations:** Contains 10 numbered rules covering areas like: 1. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 2. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 3. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 4. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 5. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 6. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 7. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 8. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 9. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion; 10. Engineers shall not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, or religion.

# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section II.1.a. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*If engineers' judgment is overruled under circumstances that endanger life or property, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.*

Engineers shall at all times recognize that their primary obligation is to protect the safety, health, property and welfare of the public. If their professional judgment is overruled under circumstances where the safety, health, property or welfare of the public are endangered, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.

The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title 'Code of Ethics for Engineers'. The page is divided into several sections: 'Preamble', 'Fundamental Canons', 'Rules of Practice', and 'Professional Obligations'. The 'Fundamental Canons' section contains the text: 'Engineers shall at all times recognize that their primary obligation is to protect the safety, health, property and welfare of the public. If their professional judgment is overruled under circumstances where the safety, health, property or welfare of the public are endangered, they shall notify their employer or client and such other authority as may be appropriate.' The 'Professional Obligations' section contains several numbered items, including: 'Engineers shall not accept or perform any work that is outside their area of competence', 'Engineers shall not accept or perform any work that is outside their area of competence', and 'Engineers shall not accept or perform any work that is outside their area of competence'.

# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section II.1.c. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information without the prior consent of the client or employer except as authorized or required by law or this Code.*

Engineers shall not reveal facts, data or information obtained in a professional capacity without the prior consent of the client or employer except as authorized or required by law or this Code.

The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title 'Code of Ethics for Engineers'. The document is organized into sections: Preamble, Fundamental Canons, and Rules of Practice. The 'Fundamental Canons' section includes Canon 1, which states that engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information without the prior consent of the client or employer. The 'Rules of Practice' section includes Rule 1, which states that engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information without the prior consent of the client or employer. The document also includes a section on 'Professional Obligations' and a section on 'Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information without the prior consent of the client or employer except as authorized or required by law or this Code.'

# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section II.1.e. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall not aid or abet the unlawful practice of engineering by a person or firm.*

Engineers having knowledge of any alleged violation of this Code shall cooperate with the proper authorities in furnishing such information or assistance as may be required.

The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title 'Code of Ethics for Engineers'. The page is divided into several sections: 'Preamble', 'Fundamental Canons', 'Rules of Practice', and 'Professional Obligations'. The 'Fundamental Canons' section includes the specific rule mentioned in the case: 'Engineers shall not aid or abet the unlawful practice of engineering by a person or firm.' The 'Professional Obligations' section includes the requirement for engineers to cooperate with authorities in reporting violations.

# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section II.4. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.*

Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.

NSPE NATIONAL SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL ENGINEERS

### Code of Ethics for Engineers

**Preamble**

Engineering is an important and learned profession. Its members are entrusted with the safety, health, and welfare of the public. Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.

**I. Fundamental Canons**

Engineers, in the best interest of the profession and the public, shall:

1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.
2. Perform services only in areas of their competence.
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.
5. Avoid conflicts of interest.
6. Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully to enhance the honor, reputation, and confidence of the profession.

**II. Rules of Practice**

**1. Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.**

- a. In all professional engagements, engineers shall not accept or perform work that endangers life or property, that is contrary to public safety, or that is beyond their competence.
- b. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable requirements.
- c. Engineers shall not reveal facts, data, or information acquired in the course of their duty for any other use without an authorized release from the client.
- d. Engineers shall not practice the sale of their name or services in business solicitations, with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest activities.
- e. Engineers shall not act or omit the willful practice of engineering in violation of laws.
- f. Engineers shall not be influenced by improper influences in the course of their duty that would result in a violation of their duty to the public.
- g. Engineers shall not be influenced by improper influences in the course of their duty that would result in a violation of their duty to the public.
- h. Engineers shall not be influenced by improper influences in the course of their duty that would result in a violation of their duty to the public.

**2. Engineers shall perform services only in the areas of their competence.**

- a. Engineers shall not undertake assignments unless they have the education or experience in the specialty to perform the services.
- b. Engineers shall not accept assignments unless they have the necessary technical skills to perform the services.
- c. Engineers shall not accept assignments unless they have the necessary technical skills to perform the services.

This code is intended to be a guide for the profession and not a substitute for the laws and regulations that govern the practice of engineering. It is the responsibility of the engineer to ensure that the work is done in accordance with the laws and regulations that govern the practice of engineering.

**3. Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.**

- a. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are false, misleading, or deceptive.
- b. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are based on incomplete or inaccurate information.
- c. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are based on hearsay or rumor.
- d. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are based on speculation or conjecture.
- e. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are based on information that is not in the public domain.
- f. Engineers shall not issue public statements that are based on information that is not in the public domain.

**4. Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.**

- a. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- b. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- c. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- d. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- e. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
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- v. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- w. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- x. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- y. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- z. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.

**5. Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.**

- a. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- b. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- c. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- d. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
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- w. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- x. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- y. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.
- z. Engineers shall not accept or perform work that is beyond their competence.

# Case: 89-7

## Duty to Report Safety Violations

### Section III.4. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall not disclose, without consent, confidential information concerning the business affairs or technical processes of any present or former client or employer, or public body on which they serve.*

Engineers shall not disclose confidential information concerning the business affairs or technical processes of any present or former client or employer without his consent.

The image shows a page from the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers. The header includes the NSPE logo and the title 'Code of Ethics for Engineers'. The page is divided into several sections: 'Preamble', 'Fundamental Canons', 'Rules of Practice', and 'Professional Obligations'. Each section contains a list of specific ethical guidelines for engineers. The text is presented in a clean, professional layout with blue accents.

## Polling Question #2

Engineer A is retained to assess the structural integrity of a building, a task for which he is qualified. But should Engineer A's report mention the other building systems, *not* within his professional scope of service?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Not sure



Case: 89-7  
*Duty to Report Safety Violations*

**Conclusion:**

It was unethical for Engineer A not to report the safety violations to the appropriate public authorities.





# NSPE BER Case: 10-5



**Public Health and Safety—  
Observing Off-Site Safety Issues**

**Facts:**

Engineer A works for ES Consulting, a consulting engineering firm. In performing engineering services for ES Consulting, Engineer A performs construction observation services on a project for Client X. During the performance of the construction observation services for Client X, Engineer A observes potential safety issues relating to the performance of work by a subcontractor on a project being constructed on an adjacent piece of property for Owner Y, a party with whom neither Engineer A, ES Consulting, or Client X has any direct relationship.



**Question:**

What are Engineer A's ethical obligations under the circumstances?

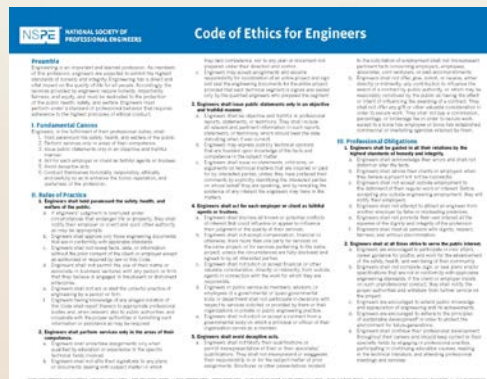


# Case: 10-5

## Public Health and Safety—Observing Off-Site Safety Issues

### Section I.1. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.*

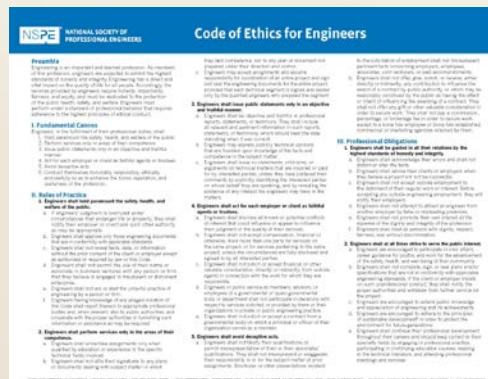


# Case: 10-5

## Public Health and Safety—Observing Off-Site Safety Issues

### Section I.6. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.*

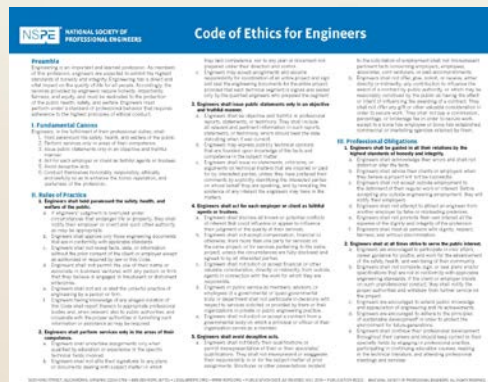


# Case: 10-5

## Public Health and Safety—Observing Off-Site Safety Issues

### Section II.1.f. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers having knowledge of any alleged violation of this Code shall report thereon to appropriate professional bodies and, when relevant, also to public authorities, and cooperate with the proper authorities in furnishing such information or assistance as may be required.*

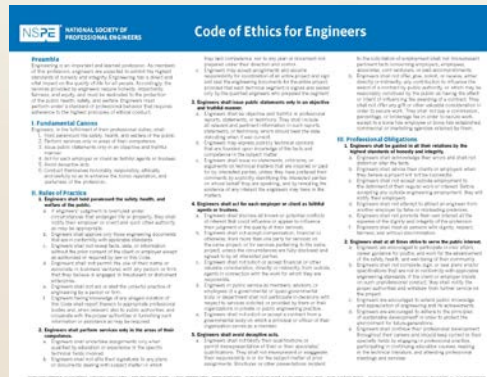


# Case: 10-5

## Public Health and Safety—Observing Off-Site Safety Issues

### Section III.2. - NSPE Code of Ethics

*Engineers shall at all times strive to serve the public interest.*



### **Polling Question #3**

The engineer's ethical obligation to “speak up” is just like the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's public awareness campaign, “If you **see** something, **say** something.”

- A. Agree
- B. Disagree
- C. Not Sure





**Conclusion:**

Engineer A should bring this potential safety issue to the attention of Engineer A's supervisor and ES Consulting. The Board assumes that the potential safety issues do not pose an imminent danger; therefore, Engineer A does not have an obligation to report this issue beyond his superiors in ES Consulting.



A photograph of two men in business attire. The man on the right is in the foreground, wearing a light blue dress shirt and a patterned tie, looking towards the man on the left. The man on the left is partially visible in profile, also in a light-colored shirt. The background is blurred.

# NSPE BER Case: 98-5

## **Public Health and Safety – Code Enforcement**

Case: 98-5  
*Public Health and Safety – Code Enforcement*

**Facts (Summary):**

Engineer A serves as a director of a building department in a major city. He is concerned that as a result of a series of budget cutbacks and more rigid code enforcement requirements, his department is woefully understaffed.

His building code officials are caught between the responsibility to be thorough in their inspections (Engineer A must sign the reports) and the city's desire to hold down costs and generate revenue from inspection fees.

The chair of the local city council is sympathetic to Engineer A's concerns and the need for more code officials. But at the same time, the city seeks more businesses to relocate to the city in order to provide more jobs and a strengthened tax base.

So, the chair seeks Engineer A's concurrence on a city ordinance that would permit certain specified buildings under construction to be "grandfathered" under the older existing enforcement requirements and not the newer, more rigid requirements.

Engineer A agrees, and the chair approves hiring more code officials.

Case: 98-5  
*Public Health and Safety – Code Enforcement*

**Question:**

Was it ethical for Engineer A to agree to concur with the chairman's proposal under the facts?



Case: 98-5  
*Public Health and Safety – Code Enforcement*

### Polling Question #4

This case depicts a form of “Faustian bargain.” That is, Engineer A agreed to go along with the Chair’s proposal (*which de-toothed the more rigid code provisions*) because doing so allowed Engineer A to hire more code officials (*an outcome he strongly desired*). Was Engineer A’s concurrence ethically acceptable?

- A. Agree
- B. Disagree
- C. Not sure



Case: 98-5  
*Public Health and Safety – Code Enforcement*

**Conclusion:**

It was not ethical for Engineer A to agree to concur with the chairman's proposal under the facts. Additionally, it was not ethical for Engineer A to sign inadequate inspection reports.



# Engineering Ethics

## Key Ethics Points

Review

# Engineering Ethics

- The NSPE Board of Ethical Review exists to, among other things, “render impartial opinions pertaining to the interpretation of the NSPE Code of Ethics.”
- A simple five-step approach to ethical problem solving includes (1) get the facts, (2) identify applicable ethical guidance and standards, (3) clarify the key ethical issues, (4) identify alternatives, and (5) act!
- In the hierarchy of ethical obligations, protection of public health and safety is paramount.

A blue, rounded rectangular button with a gradient and a drop shadow, containing the word "Review" in white, bold, sans-serif font.

Review



# Engineering Ethics

- The NSPE Code of Ethics has changed over the years, yet the code offers relevant insight and guidance on cutting-edge ethical issues; for example, innovation and climate change.
- Engineers are encouraged to adhere to the principles of sustainable development in order to protect the environment for future generations.
- Engineers simultaneously are subject to multiple, sometimes conflicting obligations.

Review

# Engineering Ethics

- Conforming to the requirements of state engineering licensure laws and regulations often involves proactive measures on the part of a professional engineer in relation to the public, employers/clients and professional colleagues.
- Sometimes identifying “the right thing” is not that hard... the hard thing is actually doing what is right.
- It is possible to face ethical dilemmas where the issue is not whether to hold paramount the public safety, health and welfare, but rather how best to do so.

Review

# Engineering Ethics

## Discussion



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**and**

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