Ethics in the Practice of Civil and Environmental Engineering

Topics
• ASCE Code of Ethics

Video
• https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=upUN460U56A

Reading Assignment
• Textbook Ch. 3 (ASCE Code of Ethics)
• See also http://www.asce.org/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/
Introduction

• What is Ethics?
  • (1929 Edition) – Science of duty and morality
  • (1953 Edition) – Science of ideal human character
  • (2007 Edition) – Principles of conduct governing an individual or a group

• Why do we need a Code of Ethics?

• How does the Code of Ethics apply to my professional life?

• How does ethics apply to my personal life, outside of my professional life?

• How does ethics impact leadership?

• What should I do if I observe unethical behavior?

• Who enforces ethics, and how is it done?
ASCE Fundamental Canons

1. Engineers shall hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public and shall strive to comply with the principles of sustainable development in the performance of their professional duties.

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

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

4. Engineers shall act in professional matters for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees, and shall avoid conflicts of interest.

5. Engineers shall build their professional reputation on the merit and integrity of their services and shall not compete unfairly with others.

6. Engineers shall act in such a manner as to uphold and enhance the honor, integrity, and dignity of the engineering profession and shall act with zero-tolerance for bribery, fraud, and corruption.

7. Engineers shall continue their professional development throughout their careers, and shall provide opportunities
Ethics Analysis

• **Harm Test:** Does this option do less harm than the alternatives?
• **Publicity Test:** Would I want my choice of this option published in the newspaper?
  Would I want my Grandma to know?
• **Defensibility Test:** Could I defend this choice of option before a committee of peers without appearing self-serving?
• **Reversibility Test:** Would I still think this choice of option was good if it were applied to me instead of others, especially if some of the effects are adverse?
• **Colleague Test:** What might my profession’s governing board or ethics committee say about this option?
• **Organization Test:** What does my organization’s ethics officer or legal counsel say about this?
• **Virtue Test:** Would a virtuous person do this? What kind of person does this?
  What kind of person would I become if I did this kind of thing all the time?

-- from “A Format for Ethical Decision Making” (2010), Michael Davis, Center for Study of Ethics in the Professions, Illinois Institute of Technology, Chicago
More Questions

• Is it honorable?
• Is there anyone from whom you would like to hide the action?
• Is it honest?
• Does it violate any agreement, actual or implied, or otherwise betray a trust?
• Does it avoid the possibility of a conflict of interest? Are there other considerations that might bias your judgment?
• Is it within your area of competence?
• Is it possible that your best effort will not be adequate?
• Is it fair?
• Is it detrimental to the legitimate interest of others?
• Is it considerate?
• Will it violate confidentiality or privacy, or otherwise harm anyone or anything?
• Is it conservative?
• Does it unnecessarily squander time or other valuable resources?
Assignment

• Write 3 guiding principles you wish to incorporate in your career with regards to ethical behavior. Submit these to the teaching assistant.