**NSPE 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 ethical conduct.

**I. Fundamental Canons**  
Engineers, in the fulfilment 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.
   1. 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.
   2. Engineers shall approve only those engineering documents that are in conformity with applicable standards.
   3. 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.
   4. Engineers shall not permit the use of their name or associate in business ventures with any person or firm that they believe is engaged in fraudulent or dishonest enterprise.
   5. Engineers shall not aid or abet the unlawful practice of engineering by a person or firm.
   6. 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.
   1. Engineers shall undertake assignments only when qualified by education or experience in the specific technical fields involved.
   2. Engineers shall not affix their signatures to any plans or documents dealing with subject matter in which they lack competence, nor to any plan or document not prepared under their direction and control.
   3. 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 engineers who prepared the segment.
3. Engineers shall issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
   1. 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.
   2. Engineers may express publicly technical opinions that are founded upon knowledge of the facts and competence in the subject matter.
   3. Engineers shall issue no statements, criticisms, or arguments on technical matters that are inspired or paid for by interested parties, unless they have prefaced 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 matters.
4. Engineers shall act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.
   1. 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.
   2. 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.
   3. 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 responsible.
   4. 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 in private or public engineering practice.
   5. Engineers shall not solicit or accept a contract from a governmental body on which a principal or officer of their organization serves as a member.
5. Engineers shall avoid deceptive acts.
   1. Engineers shall not falsify their qualifications or permit misrepresentation of their or their associates' qualifications. They shall not misrepresent or exaggerate their responsibility in or for the subject matter of prior assignments. Brochures or other presentations incident to the solicitation of employment shall not misrepresent pertinent facts concerning employers, employees, associates, joint venturers, or past accomplishments.
   2. 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 awarding of a contract. They shall not offer any gift or other valuable consideration in order to secure work. They shall not pay a commission, percentage, 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.
   1. Engineers shall acknowledge their errors and shall not distort or alter the facts.
   2. Engineers shall advise their clients or employers when they believe a project will not be successful.
   3. Engineers shall not accept outside employment to the detriment of their regular work or interest. Before accepting any outside engineering employment, they will notify their employers.
   4. Engineers shall not attempt to attract an engineer from another employer by false or misleading pretences.
   5. Engineers shall not promote their own interest at the expense of the dignity and integrity of the profession.
   6. Engineers shall treat all persons with dignity, respect, fairness and without discrimination.
2. Engineers shall at all times strive to serve the public interest.
   1. Engineers are encouraged to participate in civic affairs; career guidance for youths; and work for the advancement of the safety, health, and well-being of their community.
   2. Engineers shall not complete, 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.
   3. Engineers are encouraged to extend public knowledge and appreciation of engineering and its achievements.
   4. Engineers are encouraged to adhere to the principles of sustainable development1 in order to protect the environment for future generations.
   5. 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.
3. Engineers shall avoid all conduct or practice that deceives the public.
   1. Engineers shall avoid the use of statements containing a material misrepresentation of fact or omitting a material fact.
   2. Consistent with the foregoing, engineers may advertise for recruitment of personnel.
   3. Consistent with the foregoing, engineers may prepare articles for the lay or technical press, but such articles shall not imply credit to the author for work performed by others.
4. 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.
   1. Engineers shall not, without the consent of all interested parties, promote or arrange for new employment or practice in connection with a specific project for which the engineer has gained particular and specialized knowledge.
   2. Engineers shall not, without the consent of all interested parties, participate in or represent an adversary interest in connection with a specific project or proceeding in which the engineer has gained particular specialized knowledge on behalf of a former client or employer.
5. Engineers shall not be influenced in their professional duties by conflicting interests.
   1. Engineers shall not accept financial or other considerations, including free engineering designs, from material or equipment suppliers for specifying their product.
   2. Engineers shall not accept commissions or allowances, directly or indirectly, from contractors or other parties dealing with clients or employers of the engineer in connection with work for which the engineer is responsible.
6. Engineers shall not attempt to obtain employment or advancement or professional engagements by untruthfully criticizing other engineers, or by other improper or questionable methods.
   1. Engineers shall not request, propose, or accept a commission on a contingent basis under circumstances in which their judgment may be compromised.
   2. Engineers in salaried positions shall accept part-time engineering work only to the extent consistent with policies of the employer and in accordance with ethical considerations.
   3. Engineers shall not, without consent, use equipment, supplies, laboratory, or office facilities of an employer to carry on outside private practice.
7. Engineers shall not attempt to injure, maliciously or falsely, directly or indirectly, the professional reputation, prospects, practice, or employment of other engineers. Engineers who believe others are guilty of unethical or illegal practice shall present such information to the proper authority for action.
   1. Engineers in private practice shall not review the work of another engineer for the same client, except with the knowledge of such engineer, or unless the connection of such engineer with the work has been terminated.
   2. Engineers in governmental, industrial, or educational employ are entitled to review and evaluate the work of other engineers when so required by their employment duties.
   3. Engineers in sales or industrial employ are entitled to make engineering comparisons of represented products with products of other suppliers.
8. Engineers shall accept personal responsibility for their professional activities, provided, however, that engineers may seek indemnification for services arising out of their practice for other than gross negligence, where the engineer's interests cannot otherwise be protected.
   1. Engineers shall conform with state registration laws in the practice of engineering.
   2. Engineers shall not use association with a nonengineer, a corporation, or partnership as a "cloak" for unethical acts.
9. Engineers shall give credit for engineering work to those to whom credit is due, and will recognize the proprietary interests of others.
   1. Engineers shall, whenever possible, name the person or persons who may be individually responsible for designs, inventions, writings, or other accomplishments.
   2. Engineers using designs supplied by a client recognize that the designs remain the property of the client and may not be duplicated by the engineer for others without express permission.
   3. Engineers, before undertaking work for others in connection with which the engineer may make improvements, plans, designs, inventions, or other records that may justify copyrights or patents, should enter into a positive agreement regarding ownership.
   4. Engineers' designs, data, records, and notes referring exclusively to an employer's work are the employer's property. The employer should indemnify the engineer for use of the information for any purpose other than the original purpose.

**Road Map to Ethical Decision Making**

Ethical decisions inspire trust and with it fairness, responsibility and care for others. The ethical decision making process recognizes these conditions and requires reviewing all available options, eliminating unethical views and choosing the best ethical alternative.

Good decisions are both effective and ethical. In professional relationships, good decisions build respect, trust, and are generally consistent with good citizenship. Effective decisions are effective when they achieve what they were made for. A choice that produces unintended results is ineffective and therefore not good.

The key to making good decisions is to think about the different choices that lie ahead in order to achieve the objectives. For that reason, it is also very important to understand the difference between short-term vs. medium to long term objectives.

Making ethical decisions requires a certain sensitivity to ethical issues and a method of examining all the considerations associated with a decision. Having a method or structure for making ethical decisions is therefore essential. After this process has been performed a few times, the method is trusted and it is easier to walk through the steps.

Below is a description of ethical decision-making methods.

Framework for ethical decision making

If ethics is not based on religion, feelings, law, social practices or science, what is it based on? Countless philosophers and ethicists have attempted to answer this critical question. At least five different ethical norms or standards have been proposed. The most important are explained below.

The Utilitarian Approach

This approach dictates that the action that is the most ethical is the action that produces the most good and causes the least harm. In other words, the decision that strikes the greatest balance between good and evil.

In a business environment, it is therefore the decision that yields the most benefits and causes the least damage to customers, employees, shareholders, the environment, etc.

The Right Approach

The right approach suggests that the most ethical decision is the one that best protects and respects the moral rights of all concerned. This approach argues that people have a dignity based on human nature or their ability to freely choose what they want to do with their lives.

Based on that dignity, they have the right to be treated equally by others and not just as a means to an(other) end.

The Fairness or Justice Approach

All equals should be treated equally. The Greek philosopher Aristotle and others contributed to that idea. Today, this idea is used to indicate that ethical decisions treat everyone equally. If not equal, this must be based on a standard that is explainable.

People are paid more for their hard work when they contribute more to the organization. That is fair. But many wonder whether the salaries of CEOs, some 100 times higher than others, are fair. Is this standard defensible?

The Common Good Approach

The Greek philosophers also contributed to the idea that living in a community is a good thing. People’s actions and actions must contribute to this. This approach suggests that relationships within society are the basis of ethical reasoning and acting. Respect and compassion for all others, especially the vulnerable, are prerequisites for maintaining an ethical way of life.

The Virtue Approach

An ancient approach to ethics is the belief that acting ethically must be in accordance with certain virtues that ensure the development of humanity in general. Virtues are tendencies and habits that enable man to act with the highest potential of human character.