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Chapter 2

2.3.1 Identifying Ethical Issues

ethics concerns actions that have the potential to have a serious impact on the lives of others.

there will be more than one prominent issue.

2.3.2 Narrowing the Focus

Analysis should focus on only a couple of the main issues in a case.

2.3.3 Determining Relevant Facts

Facts related to case studies on engineering ethics could be grouped into the following three categories:

(1) material facts—those concerning what went wrong/right from the perspective of material conditions and circumstances, which could be associated with the specifically engineering dimensions of incidents;

(2) facts regarding individuals—those concerning the action or inaction of individuals;

(3) facts regarding organization—those concerning the ways that persons interact with persons, persons interact with technology, etc., in terms of business, government, etc., policies and guidelines.

2.3.4 Making Reasonable Assumptions

These assumptions add uncertainty in attempting to resolve ethical issues related to case study, but this uncertainty is preferable to the claim that no conclusion is possible.

2.3.5 Undertaking Definitional Clarification

In addressing an ethical issue to be resolved, it is thus important to explain the ways any central concepts are used, especially those subject to differing interpretations.

2.3.6 Conducting Ethical Analysis

This means that in the process of application, a simultaneous process of refining and justifying the prior foundations for making ethical judgments should also occur.



Cases

If only one principle applies, then no conflict will exist, although this is seldom the case. If conflicts exist, then it must be determined whether one principle should override another.

2.3.7 Reviewing the Process

As case study proceeds, new issues might be recognized, additional facts may be needed, or confused concepts could require clarification.

2.3.8 Resolving the Issue

After the process review, answers to the initially posed questions can be stated with some certainty.

2.3.9 Identifying Practical Constraints

It is important to examine whether any practical constraints exist that would make an ethically acceptable action too difficult to expect from someone in the set of circumstances under consideration.

2.3.10 Avoiding Ethical Problems

Although circumstances sometimes require having to face and make difficult decisions with regard to ethical problems, at other times such problems can be avoided in the first place.