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Importance of Ethics

What is the purpose of following a code of ethics? To be diverse? To protect? Or is it to be a decent human being? All of these fit into the reasoning as to why it's important for engineers to follow a code of ethics. The importance of such is unprecedented, to protect, to include, and to be clear & concise, is to follow a code of ethics.

What is a code of ethics? Essentially, a code of ethics gives an engineer the guidance and support they need when they have questions of where to go and what to do when they encounter a specific situation. Not only does a code of ethics help the engineer, It can also hold them accountable to what they have made or the process in making something. A certain code that relates to this is code 1 of the IEEE Code of Ethics, where "responsibility" is listed as a code that engineers must follow. It states, "to accept responsibility in making decisions consistent with the safety, and welfare of the public..." This has been put into place to tell engineers they are responsible for what they have made, whether it impacts the clients, users, or taxpayers in good company or in bad.

The code of ethics helps engineers to realize that conflicts may arise within their area of work. And it helps to guide them on a safe and just route, where their and their coworkers beliefs and morals are continuously protected. Like if someone were to bribe them for secured data, code 4 would help them to make a just decision by telling the engineer, "to reject bribery in all its forms." This is just one form that helps engineers to navigate through the hard encounters they may have with not just clients, but their coworkers who may believe different things than them. Whether that be religion, politics, or anything else at all.

Personally, when I am faced with an ethical situation, I am reminded of my religion and the moral values in which I hold that can be connected to an ethical situation. If I am faced with a hardship, I remind myself of what I should do, in order to remain steadfast and unbothered. I remind myself that everyone deserves love, and that I need to approach the situation with a steady, unwavering heart and mind. In that way, I can make the right decision for the company, clients, coworkers, and even myself.

Many Ethical topics arose while I participated in the classes' ethics discussion. Some, more apparent than others. For example, while I wrote about Volkswagen abusing the power they had over the car industry. Others wrote about employees who feared that making the right decision would cost them their job. But what came up in almost every post, was the fact that ethical decisions have a big impact on clients and that companies are focused on one thing. Money. It is the driving power that creates the ethical issues. Whether that be disregarding EPA regulations or overlooking the fact that clients' information is secretive and needs to be regarded as such.

Within the Volkswagen case, where the company failed to meet EPA regulation because their vehicles produced up to 40 times more pollution than the allowed amount. The most apparent ethical violations that Volkswagen committed were against Integrity, Honesty, and Responsibility. Their integrity was shown to be a flake because they failed to be honest to themselves and their customers which violated having strong moral principles. Next, because when Volkswagen created software to bypass emissions tests, the ethical honesty of their case was violated. They lied to the EPA, to their customers, and to their competitors. And finally, they violated their ethical responsibility for the same reason. Because they refused to acknowledge that their vehicles were morally wrong for their world, they failed to take responsibility for what they created. Now, the three other Virtue of Ethics Fidelity, Charity, and Self-Discipline were not included as violations that Volkswagen committed because although they may fit into this specific event, they don't fit as well as Integrity, Honesty, and Responsibility do. And while all of

the Virtue of Ethics policies are accounted for, the IEEE Code of Ethics has many codes that Volkswagen violated. For example, the first code states “to accept responsibility in making decisions consistent with the safety, health, and welfare of the public, and to disclose promptly factors that might endanger the public or the environment.” This code was obviously disregarded because the company quite literally endangered the public and the environment by emitting 40 times more pollution than the EPA allows.

Overall, a code of ethics essentially provides engineers, companies, and all walks of life with a handbook on how to handle different situations that they might be in. It not only helps them get out of a tight spot, It also holds them accountable for wrongdoings that they might have committed. So it essentially makes them responsible for their projects and/or products that were completed by them. And by understanding the benefits and accountability that the code of ethics provides, we can see how it affects decision-making within the workplace in order to be of service to the public.