

# THE PATH TO COMPLIANCE

## RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Those of you licensed before 1980 may remember a one sheet Code of Ethics that was furnished to you by this Board along with the notice that you had passed the licensing exam. The Code admonished you to uphold and advance the honor and dignity of the engineering and surveying professions by means of the 8 canons of practice shown thereon. The Board required that you sign and date that sheet of paper and return it to its office for placement in your permanent file. You kept a copy in a prominent place to remind you of your ethical and professional responsibility.

The Board replaced that Code of Ethics shortly after 1980 when it promulgated the Rules of Professional Conduct. Those Rules, many of which came from the NSPE Code of Ethics and other professional societies, can now be found in Section 245: 15-9 in our present day Administrative Rules. The Rules of Professional Conduct amplify and clarify what was in the original Code of Ethics. The permanent nature of the ethical principles adopted by the Board can be attested to by the fact that the language used in 1980 is very similar with what exists today. Their permanence can be ascribed to have had generations of concerned engineers and land surveyors who have participated in writing these rules. We all benefit from having rules based on the real ethical situations experienced by those who came before us while dealing with other licensees, employers/clients and the public.

While ethical principles remain constant, the increasingly complex nature of ethical conduct requires the Board to periodically examine the significance and relevance of each rule to measure its benefit towards protecting the public. If changes are suggested by board members, individual licensees or a technical or professional society, they are included in the rule making process which includes formally receiving input from licensees and approval by the Oklahoma legislature once a new rule is approved. The Board follows up with publication in the newsletter and on the website



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and outreach programs with state professional and technical societies.

Licensed Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors are charged with the responsibility of having knowledge of Board Rules and Laws. This knowledge is particularly important because it can become a resource for licensees to solve problems on their own. These Rules of Professional Conduct were not written primarily for disciplinary purposes, but to provide helpful guidance to licensees, to lend support to those licensees who are trying to act ethically, and even to contribute to the professionals' public image. There is strength for a licensee to be able to affirmatively state that the Board's Rules will not allow them to perform an unethical task such as signing documents not prepared under their supervision or outside of their area of expertise. The same is true for standing up when the professional's judgment is overruled because cost or other outside pressure being applied. Engineers and surveyors need support in the form of laws and rules that will assist them when they stand up for the protection of the public.

Acting ethically at all times is challenging because of the pressures placed on engineers and land surveyors; but, it is necessary because of the trust placed on Professional Engineers and Land Surveyors. The public's ability to continue to trust licensees like the professionals they are depends on the individual's and a firm's continued commitment to practicing ethically. The health, safety, property and welfare of the public requires no less.