CODES OF ETHICS

The codes of ethics have to be adopted by engineering societies as well as by engineers. These codes exhibit the rights, duties, and obligations of the members of a profession. Codes are the set of laws and standards. A code of ethics provides a framework for ethical judgment for a professional. A code cannot be said as totally comprehensive and cover all ethical situations that an engineer has to face. It serves only as a starting point for ethical decision-making. A code expresses the circumstances to ethical conduct shared by the members of a profession. It is also to be noted that ethical codes do not establish the new ethical principles. They repeat only the principles and standards that are already accepted as responsible engineering practice. A code defines the roles and responsibilities of professionals.

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Roles of codes and its functions

1. Inspiration and Guidance

Codes give a convinced motivation for ethical conduct and provide a helpful guidance for achieving the obligations of engineers in their work. Codes contribute mostly general guidance as they have to be brief. Specific directions may also be given to apply the code in morally good ways. The following engineering societies have published codes of ethics.

AAES - American Association of Engineering Societies
ABET - Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (USA)
NSPE - National Society of Professional Engineer (USA)
IEEE - Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering (USA)
AICTE - All India Council for Technical Education (India)

Most of the technological companies have established their own codes such as pentagon (USA), Microsoft etc. These codes are very much helpful to strengthen the moral issues on the work of an engineer.

2. Support

Codes always support an engineer who follows the ethical principles. Codes give engineers a positive, a possible good support for standing on moral issues. Codes also serve as a legal support for engineers.

3. Deterrence and Discipline

Codes act as a deterrent because they never encourage to act immorally. They also provide discipline among the Engineers to act morally on the basis of codes does not overrule the rights of those being investigated.

4. Education and Mutual Understanding

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Codes have to be circulated and approved officially by the professionals, the public and government organizations which concern with the moral responsibilities of engineers and organizations.

5. Contributing to the profession's Public Image

Codes help to create a good image to the public of an ethically committed profession. It helps the engineers in an effective manner to serve the public. They also gives self-regulation for the profession itself.

6. Protecting the Status Quo

Codes determine ethical conventions which help to create an agreed upon minimum level of ethical conduct. But they can also suppress the disagreement within the profession.

7. Promoting Business Interests

Codes help to improve the business interests. They help to moralize the business dealings to benefit those within the profession.

Limitations of Codes

1.Codes are restricted to general and vague wordings. Due to this limitation they cannot be applicable to all situations directly. It is also impossible to analyze fully and predict the full range of moral problems that arises in a complex profession.

2.Engineering codes often have internal conflicts. So they can‟t give a solution or method for resolving the conflict.

3. They cannot be treated as the final moral authority for any professional conduct. Codes represent a compromise between differing judgments and also developed among heated committee disagreements.

4.Only a few practicing engineers are the members of Professional Societies and so they can not be compelled to abide by their codes.

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5.Many engineers who are the members of Professional Societies are not aware of the existence of the codes of their societies and they never go through it.

6. Codes can be reproduced in a very rapid manner.

7. Codes are said to be coercive i.e., implemented by threat or force.