Safety Ethics or Safety Isn’t for the Faint of Heart

Janet A. Gallup, CSP
Area A Director, Region II
(520) 360-0041
safetyinaz@gmail.com
Building a safety culture...

The safety/IH professional is often unique in that:

• They are singular in the performance of their duties.

• They represent safety and health while others in their organization are production based.

• They must be a positive force for change even when conditions make it difficult.
Are ethical standards important in what we do as safety/IH professionals?
What do we mean by “ethics?”

- Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary: The discipline dealing with good and bad and with moral duty and obligation.
Another definition:

- A system of principles guiding professional behavior.
- Is trust an ethical core value?
Right vs. Wrong

- Does it change?

- We constantly evaluate our own and our society’s ethical standards.
Group Discussion:

Are ethics set in stone?

If they change, why?
What ethics are not:

- Feelings
- Religion
- Law
- Society
The importance of ethical behavior...

- In a recent survey:
  - 94% of the professionals surveyed stated ethical behavior is critical or important
  - 82% stated they would take less money to work for an ethical employer
  - 1 in 4 professionals witnessed unethical behavior in their industries
  - 21% were pressured to behave in an illegal manner
Ethics...

Where do they come from, what is our compass?

- *Faith*
- *Reason*
- *Social Norm/Custums*
- *Family*
- *Upbringing/Background*
- *American Society of Safety Engineers Standards*
- *American Industrial Hygiene Association*
- *I don’t know...*
What is ethical to you?
Most agree that good ethics include the following:

- Value for Human Life
- Integrity
- Justice
- The Good of the Many
- Excellence
ASSE’s Code Of Professional Conduct:

**Our Commitment to Professionalism**

Serve the public, employees, employers, clients, the Society, and the profession with fidelity, honesty, and impartiality.

In all professional relationships, treat others with respect, civility, and without discrimination.

Abstain from behavior that will unjustly cause harm to the reputation of the Society, its members, and the profession.
• Continually improve professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and awareness of relevant new developments through training, education, networking, and work experiences.

• Consider qualifications before undertaking any professional activity and perform only those services that may be handled competently.
• Make informed decisions in the performance of professional duties that adhere to all relevant laws, regulations, and recognized standards of practice.

• Inform all appropriate parties when professional judgment indicates that there is an unacceptable level of risk of injury, illness, property damage, or environmental harm.

• Maintain the confidentiality of information acquired through professional practice that is designated or generally recognized as non-public, confidential, or privileged.
• Accurately represent professional qualifications including education, credentials, designations, affiliations, titles, and work experience.

• Avoid situations that create actual, potential or perceived conflicts between personal and professional interests, and if a potential conflict of interest arises disclose all applicable facts to potentially affected parties.

• Approved by House of Delegates June 3, 2012
AIHA Code of Ethics

- **Canon 1**: Practice their profession following recognized scientific principles with the realization that lives, health and well-being of people may depend upon their professional judgment and that they are obligated to protect the health and well-being of people.

- **Canon 2**: Counsel affected parties factually regarding potential health risks and precautions necessary to avoid adverse health effects.
**Canon 3:** Keep confidential personal and business information obtained during the exercise of industrial hygiene activities, except when required by law or overriding health and safety considerations.

**Canon 4:** Avoid circumstances where a compromise of professional judgment or conflict of interest may arise.

**Canon 5:** Perform services only in the areas of their competence.

**Canon 6:** Act responsibly to uphold the integrity of the profession.
BCSP Code of Ethics

“Certificant’s shall, in their professional safety activities, sustain and advance the integrity, honor, and prestige of the safety profession by adherence to these standards.”
Overall Goal

- The primary focus for the safety/IH profession is prevention of harm to people, property and the environment.

BP Oil Rig explosion 11 workers die, massive environmental disaster 2010
The Role of Safety/IH Professionals

- Identify Hazards
- Facilitate hazard elimination/reduction/control
- Work with management to implement loss prevention/loss control within the workplace
- Implement safety training and ensure the ongoing success of their safety policies
- Educate management as to the ongoing importance of the safety program in their workplace
- Be exemplary in leadership
5 Challenges for the Safety/IH Professional

#1 You may see things differently than management!

- The challenge is to persuade management to do business in a way that enhances safety and health in the workplace.
What would you do?
#2 You work for your employer but you are there for the employees.

- Employees often speak to the safety professional in confidence

- You want employees to trust you, how then can you relate to management what they need to know?
#3 – Safety is #1

Safety - Production
Mixed messages...
#4 – Weariness, Complacency and Surrender

- Every day we must make the choice to serve, even when we feel embattled.

- Battles may be the same, recycling over the years, leaving us exhausted.

- We can become reluctant to “rock the boat”

- Our challenge is to persevere, don’t give up.
#5 – Live the message

- Safety professionals must lead

- Safety professionals cannot allow any conflict of interest to dilute their efforts

- In their private lives, safety professionals must adhere to good safety practices
How do we know if something is unethical?

- Trust your own instincts (radar).
- Beware of the *appearance* of impropriety...
- Is this contrary to the safety professionals/IH code of conduct?
- Better safe than sorry.
Group Exercise

- When in your group, pick a spokesperson;
- Discuss among you an ethical situation one of you has encountered while working in safety.
- How was the situation handled?
- What, if any, were the consequences; good or bad.
- Present to the group for discussion.
Incident prevention is worth a little bravery...
Questions