

**CODE OF PRINCIPLES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT**  
OF THE  
**AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS**

ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, March 8, 1912.

- A. General Principles.
- B. The Engineer's Relations to Client or Employer.
- C. Ownership of Engineering Records and Data.
- D. The Engineer's Relations to the Public.
- E. The Engineer's Relations to the Engineering Fraternity.
- F. Amendments.

While the following principles express, generally, the engineer's relations to client, employer, the public, and the engineering fraternity, it is not presumed that they define all of the engineer's duties and obligations.

**A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

1. In all of his relations the engineer should be guided by the highest principles of honor.
2. It is the duty of the engineer to satisfy himself to the best of his ability that the enterprises with which he becomes identified are of legitimate character. If after becoming associated with an enterprise he finds it to be of questionable character, he should sever his connection with it as soon as practicable.

**B. THE ENGINEER'S RELATIONS TO CLIENT OR EMPLOYER**

3. The engineer should consider the protection of a client's or employer's interests his first professional obligation, and therefore should avoid every act contrary to this duty. If any other considerations, such as professional obligations or restrictions, interfere with his meeting the legitimate expectation of a client or employer, the engineer should inform him of the situation.
4. An engineer can not honorably accept compensation, financial or otherwise, from more than one interested party, without the consent of all parties. The engineer, whether consulting, designing installing or operating, must not accept commissions, directly or indirectly, from parties dealing with his client or employer.
5. An engineer called upon to decide on the use of inventions, apparatus, or anything in which he has a financial interest, should make his status in the matter clearly understood before engagement.
6. An engineer in independent practise may be employed by more than one party, when the interests of the several parties do not conflict; and it should be understood that he is not expected to devote his entire time to the work of one, but is free to carry out other engagements. A consulting

engineer permanently retained by a party, should notify others of this affiliation before entering into relations with them, if, in his opinion, the interests might conflict.

7. An engineer should consider it his duty to make every effort to remedy dangerous defects in apparatus or structures or dangerous conditions of operation, and should bring these to the attention of his client or employer.

### C. OWNERSHIP OF ENGINEERING RECORDS AND DATA

8. It is desirable that an engineer undertaking for others work in connection with which he may make improvements, inventions, plans, designs, or other records, should enter into an agreement regarding their ownership.

9. If an engineer uses information which is not common knowledge or public property, but which he obtains from a client or employer, the results in the form of plans, designs, or other records, should not be regarded as his property, but the property of his client or employer.

10. If an engineer uses only his own knowledge, or information which by prior publication, or otherwise, is public property and obtains no engineering data from a client or employer, except performance specifications or routine information; then in the absence of an agreement to the contrary the results in the form of inventions, plans, designs, or other records, should be regarded as the property of the engineer, and the client or employer should be entitled to their use only in the case for which the engineer was retained.

11. All work and results accomplished by the engineer in the form of inventions, plans, designs, or other records, that are outside of the field of engineering for which a client or employer has retained him, should be regarded as the engineer's property unless there is an agreement to the contrary.

12. When an engineer or manufacturer builds apparatus from designs supplied to him by a customer, the designs remain the property of the customer and should not be duplicated by the engineer or manufacturer for others without express permission. When the engineer or manufacturer and a customer jointly work out designs and plans or develop inventions a clear understanding should be reached before the beginning of the work regarding the respective rights of ownership in any inventions, designs, or matters of similar character, that may result.

13. Any engineering data or information which an engineer obtains from his client or employer, or which he creates as a result of such information, must be considered confidential by the engineer; and while he is justified in using such data or information in his own practise as forming part of his professional experience, its publication without express permission is improper.

14. Designs, data, records and notes made by an employee and referring exclusively to his employer's work, should be regarded as his employer's property.

15. A customer, in buying apparatus, does not acquire any right in its design but only the use of the apparatus purchased. A client does not

acquire any right to the plans made by a consulting engineer except for the specific case for which they were made.

#### D. THE ENGINEER'S RELATIONS TO THE PUBLIC

16. The engineer should endeavor to assist the public to a fair and correct general understanding of engineering matters, to extend the general knowledge of engineering, and to discourage the appearance of untrue, unfair or exaggerated statements on engineering subjects in the press or elsewhere, especially if these statements may lead to, or are made for the purpose of, inducing the public to participate in unworthy enterprises.

17. Technical discussions and criticisms of engineering subjects should not be conducted in the public press, but before engineering societies, or in the technical press.

18. It is desirable that first publication concerning inventions or other engineering advances should not be made through the public press, but before engineering societies or through technical publications.

19. It is unprofessional to give an opinion on a subject without being fully informed as to all the facts relating thereto and as to the purposes for which the information is asked. The opinion should contain a full statement of the conditions under which it applies.

#### E. THE ENGINEER'S RELATIONS TO THE ENGINEERING FRATERNITY

20. The engineer should take an interest in and assist his fellow engineers by exchange of general information and experience, by instruction and similar aid, through the engineering societies or by other means. He should endeavor to protect all reputable engineers from misrepresentation.

21. The engineer should take care that credit for engineering work is attributed to those who, so far as his knowledge of the matter goes, are the real authors of such work.

22. An engineer in responsible charge of work should not permit non-technical persons to overrule his engineering judgments on purely engineering grounds.

#### F. AMENDMENTS

Additions to, or modifications in, this Code may be made by the Board of Directors under the procedure applying to a by-law.

#### HISTORY OF THE CODE

At the Milwaukee Convention in May, 1906, Dr. Schuyler Skaats Wheeler delivered his presidential address on "Engineering Honor." It was the sense of the Convention that the ideas contained in this address should be embodied in a Code of Ethics for the electrical engineering profession, and to this end the following committee was appointed in October, 1906:

SCHUYLER SKAATS WHEELER, *Chairman.*

H. W. BUCK

CHARLES P. STEINMETZ

In May, 1907, the committee reported a code to the President and Board of Directors for discussion at the June Convention at Niagara Falls. It was discussed and adopted by the Convention but later the adoption had to be set aside on account of the provisions of the Constitution prohibiting

Conventions from acting upon questions affecting the Institute's organization or policy.

It was taken up by the Board of Directors on August 30, 1907, revised, printed and submitted to the membership for suggestions to be sent to a new committee appointed by President Stott.

It lay dormant until June, 1911, when, in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors, President Jackson appointed a committee. The personnel of this committee, as reappointed by President Dunn in August, 1911, is as follows:

GEORGE F. SEVER, *Chairman.*

H. W. BUCK

CHARLES P. STEINMETZ

SAMUEL REBER

HENRY G. STOTT

SCHUYLER SKAATS WHEELER

This committee's work was presented in a report to the Board of Directors on February 9, 1912, when the code was tentatively adopted. After a month's careful analysis and consideration of numerous suggestions from the advisory members of the committee and others, the completed code was adopted at the meeting of the Board of Directors on March 8, 1912.

At the meeting of February 9, the title of the committee and of the code was changed from that of Code of Ethics to Code of Principles of Professional Conduct.

The committee was assisted by eighteen advisory members appointed by the President. Their names are appended.

WILLIAM S. BARSTOW

HENRY H. NORRIS

LOUIS BELL

RALPH W. POPE

JOHN J. CARTY

HARRIS J. RYAN

FRANCIS B. CROCKER

CHARLES F. SCOTT

DUGALD C. JACKSON

SAMUEL SHELDON

A. E. KENNELLY

WILLIAM STANLEY

JOHN W. LIEB, JR.

LEWIS B. STILLWELL

C. O. MAILLOUX

ELIHU THOMSON

RALPH D. MERSHON

W. D. WEAVER