What We'll Discuss

TOPIC OUTLINE

Importance of Codes

Abuse of Codes

Limitation of Codes

Justification of Codes

Importance of Codes

- Codes of ethics state the moral responsibilities of engineers as seen by the profession and as represented by a professional society.
- Codes of ethics play at least eight essential roles: serving and protecting the public, providing guidance, offering inspiration, establishing shared standards, supporting responsible professionals, contributing to education, deterring wrongdoing, and strengthening a profession's image.

Importance of Codes

Serving and protecting the public:

- Trust and trustworthiness are essential. A code of ethics functions as a commitment by the profession as a whole that engineers will serve the public health, safety, and welfare.

Guidance:

- Codes provide helpful guidance by articulating the main obligations of engineers. Because codes should be brief to be effective, they offer mostly general guidance.

Importance of Codes

Inspiration:

- Because codes express a profession's collective commitment to ethics, they provide a positive stimulus (motivation) for ethical conduct. Member of a profession is committed to responsible conduct in promoting the safety, health, and welfare of the public.

Shared Standards:

- The diversity of moral viewpoints among individual engineers makes it essential that professions establish explicit standards, in particular minimum (but hopefully high) standards.

Importance of Codes

Support for responsible professionals:

- Codes give positive support to professionals seeking to act ethically. Moreover, codes can potentially serve as legal support for engineers criticized for living up to work-related professional obligations.

Education and mutual understanding:

- Codes can be used by professional societies and in the classroom to prompt discussion and reflection on moral issues. A case in point is NSPE's BER, which actively promotes moral discussion by applying the NSPE code to cases for educational purposes.

Importance of Codes

Deterrence and discipline:

- Codes can also serve as the formal basis for investigating unethical conduct. Where such investigation is possible, a deterrent for immoral behaviour is thereby provided.

Contributing to the profession's image:

- Codes can present a positive image to the public of an ethically committed profession. Where warranted, the image can help engineers more effectively serve the public.

Abuse of Codes

- **Probably the worst abuse of engineering codes is to restrict honest moral effort on the part of individual engineers to preserve the profession's public image and protect the status quo.**
- The best way to increase trust is by encouraging and helping engineers to speak freely and responsibly about public safety and well-being.
- For example, two engineers were expelled from American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) for violating a section of its code forbidding public remarks critical of other engineers.

Limitations of Codes

- Most codes are restricted to general wording, and hence inevitably contain substantial areas and Codes of Ethics of vagueness. Thus, they may not be able to straightforwardly address all situations.
- Other uncertainties can arise when different entries in codes come into conflict with each other.
- Adoption of a unified code.
- Most important, despite their authority in guiding professional conduct, codes are not always the complete and final word.

Justification of Code

A sound professional code will stand up to three tests:

1. **It will be clear and coherent.**
2. **It will organize basic moral values applicable to the profession in a systematic and comprehensive way.**
3. **It will provide helpful and reasonable guidance.**

A justified professional code will take account of both the profession's public good and social and Codes of Ethics frameworks and institutional settings.

CODES OF ETHICS

- National Society for Professional Engineers – NSPE
- Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers – IEEE
- American Society of Mechanical Engineers – AMSE
- American Society of Civil Engineers – ASCE
- Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology – ABET
- All India Council for Technical Education - AICTE

THANK YOU