Professional Ethics: A Tragedy of the Commons Perspective

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Presentation Outline

• Need for Annual Professional Ethics Training
• Relationship of Professionals & Society
• Tragedy of the Commons Perspective
• Need for Government Regulations
• Government Deregulation Uncertainty
• Bottom Line: We Must Still Hold Ourselves to a Higher Standard!
Why Professional Ethics Training?
What is the Alliance of Hazardous Materials Professionals?

- Business Networking-Social Club
- Education & Training Organization
- Professional Society
Professional Society Requires:

- High Certification Standards
- Dynamic, Responsive Membership
- Proactive Public Relations
- Professional Recognition Goals
- Public Service Outreach
- Code of Ethics
Codes of professional ethics are established by professional societies to help guide members in performing their job functions according to sound & consistent ethical principles.
Professional Society Requires:

- Quality Seminars & Conferences
- HMM Desk Reference Textbook
- Professional Position Papers
- Refereed Professional Journal
Who are We?

- Demonstrated our education background & relevant work experience
- Passed rigorous & comprehensive exam:
  - 25% Laws and Regulations
  - 35% Science & Technology
  - 40% Management Principals & Practical Application
- Maintained our proficiency
  - Meet recertification requirements [document 17 CMPs (certification maintenance points) every 5 years]
  - Continuing education (at least 20 hours/per year)
- **Uphold an enforced ethical code**
Demands

- Highest moral integrity from those responsible for handling & transporting dangerous goods
- Certificants required to practice in a manner:
  - consistent with all applicable laws & regulations
  - demonstrate integrity, honesty & fairness in all activities
  - strive for excellence in all matters of ethical conduct
Our Credential’s Value to Society

• Professionalism requires a public commitment and a realization that our competence has significant social value
• Society turns to its professionals for guidance & judgments in eradicating and rectifying its problems
Our Relationship with Society

• Based on public trust and confidence
• Confidence is acquired through experience
• Trust, however, is much more subjective
• In order to deal with trust in a more objective manner: a code of Ethics has been established
Code of Ethics #1

Our primary responsibility is to protect the public and the environment.
Code of Ethics #2

Shall act with integrity in any relationship that involves an employer or client
Shall function only within his or her area of competence
Code of Ethics #4

Shall behave with professional decorum & restraint, and shall not exhibit conduct that brings discredit to our credentials.
Code of Ethics #5

• Shall participate in continuing education and professional development opportunities, share pertinent information with the professional community and the public, disseminate acquired knowledge and skill to others & uphold ethical precepts of our profession

• Shall seek opportunities to be active in civic affairs and to promote our profession
Professional Discipline

- Unprofessional acts & questionable ethics by any individual will decrease value of our credentials
- Fortitude to report potential ethical violations
- Collective discipline within our membership must be enforced, including certification revocation
Tragedy of the Commons

- Garrett Hardin’s Essay in Science Magazine (1968)
- Warned that as our human population increases, there would be mounting pressures on resources at the local and global levels, leading to overexploitation & ruin

Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all.
Garrett Hardin’s Hypothetical Essay

- Fourteenth century Britain was organized as a loosely aligned collection of villages, each with a common pasture for villagers to graze horses, cattle and sheep.
- Each household attempted to gain wealth by putting as many animals on the commons as it could afford.
- As the village grew in size and more and more animals were placed on the commons, overgrazing ruined the pasture.
- No stock could be supported on the commons thereafter.
- As a consequence of population growth, greed, and the logic of the commons, village after village collapsed.
Need for Government Regulation
Government Deregulation Uncertainty

- Mandates to eliminate two regulations for each new regulation proposed with an end goal of eliminating 75% of our regulations is creating uncertainty & anguish within our hazardous materials management profession
- Yes, governments change
- However, the foundational basis of our professional ethics doesn’t change
- **Bottom Line: We Must Still Hold Ourselves to Higher Standards!**
All substances are “poisonous”; there is none which is not a “poison”. The right dose differentiates a poison and a remedy.
HAZARD \times EXPOSURE = RISK
Plethora of Competing Dynamics:

- Globalization vs. National Interests
- Urban vs. Rural Perspectives
- Collective (Tribal) Interests vs. Individualism
- Left Wing Politics vs. Right Wing Politics
- Real News vs. Fake News (alternative facts)
- Abundance vs. Scarcity Perspectives
- Demands to do more with less (finite) resources provided
It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only
An invitation to Stand with me in Support of our Public Servants
During this time of deep budget cuts, you are invited to now **Stand** with me to make a collective **Statement of Support** for all government agencies who have a **Mission** to:

- Protect public health & safety, worker occupational safety, plus the environment and natural resources
- Respond to natural disasters & emergencies
- Improve our scientific knowledge & understanding
- Ensure safe handling, management, transport & disposal of hazardous materials
- Their **Mission** is our **Mission**, and the foundation for our collective EHS & HMM professions
Code of Ethics – Everyday Applications

- Conduct business within the spirit of the law
- Treat your clients with respect
- Treat your co-workers with respect
- Always perform to the best of your ability
- Don’t condone, promote, or support unethical conduct
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