

The Institute of Fire Safety Managers

Code of Ethics and Discipline

ETHICAL RULES AND PROCEDURES FOR MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

1. Any professional organisation, particularly one which provides support to those working in critical issues affecting the safety of the public must operate with the highest ethical values to engender trust in its members. Because of the high profile of fire safety, any failure in ethical standards by any organisation or individual practitioner will reflect adversely on the profession as a whole.
2. The Institute of Fire Safety Managers requires its members to maintain the highest ethical standards and behaviour, so that those standards are transferred into the profession as a whole and so that the good name and standing of Institute is maintained. In complying with this code of practice, members may sometimes find that the standards appear contrary to their personal self-interest; this document is therefore intended to act as a guide to members in the identification of occasions when they might be at risk of failing to recognise or conform to the required standards of conduct.
3. It is not practicable or possible to establish ethical requirements that will apply to all situations and circumstances that members may encounter. Every situation depends on its own context and if members are in doubt as to their correct course of action, they should contact the Secretary General of the Institute or obtain appropriate legal advice.

ETHICAL RULES AND PROCEDURES

4. Members of the Institute, consequent upon their election, are expected and required to follow the ethical rules and procedures set out below.
5. Members should behave with integrity in all professional and business relationships. Integrity implies not merely honesty but also fair dealing and truthfulness.
 - a. While employed, members should observe the terms of their employment, however such terms or conditions of employment cannot require members to be implicated in any dishonest transaction. The following principles must be observed at all times:
 - Where encouraged or instructed to engage in any activity that is unlawful, members are entitled and required to decline.
 - If a member becomes aware that his or her employers have committed an unlawful act, every effort should be made to persuade the employer not to continue the unlawful activity and to rectify the matter.
 - If an employee would feel uncomfortable about defending an action or activity in open court or to the press, then it is likely that such action should be avoided on ethical grounds.

b. Members are required to conduct their business in accordance with the laws of the United Kingdom and, when overseas, in accordance with the laws of the host country.

c. Members in practice overseas or working overseas, are required to comply with local laws and should, in a country in which the profession is controlled by a reputable body, adhere to any local ethical guidance and good practice, even though to do so may not be strictly in accordance with these rules and procedures.

d. Members working in a country in which the profession is not so guided or controlled should follow the guidance of the Institute unless the well established and generally accepted legally worked practice of local reputable firms is to the contrary.

6. Members should carry out their professional work with due skill, care, diligence and expedition, and with proper regard for the technical and professional standards expected of them as Institute members.

a. In agreeing to carry out professional work, members imply they have the level of competence to perform those services and that their knowledge, skill and experience will be applied with reasonable care and diligence.

b. Members should not accept or perform work that they are not competent to undertake unless they obtain such advice, training and assistance from a suitably qualified person to enable them to carry out the work in a competent and professional manner.

c. Members should conduct themselves with courtesy and consideration towards all with whom they come into contact during the course of performing their work.

7. Members should strive for objectivity in all professional and business judgements.

a. Conflicts of interest have an important bearing on objectivity and independence, and could be relevant where there is any relationship or situation affecting a member or firm, or any business or other interest held by the member or firm, which may threaten or appear to threaten objectivity. The member concerned should consider the possible need to disclose the relationship, situation or interest to the affected parties.

b. A self-interest threat to the objectivity of a member or firm will arise where there is or is likely to be a conflict of interest between a firm and its client. If it cannot be seen by both the member and the client that any conflict can be managed with appropriate safeguards, the member should refuse or discontinue the assignment as speedily as possible.

c. A self-interest may arise or be seen to arise where the interests of two or more clients are in conflict. There is, however, nothing improper in a member having two or more clients whose interests may potentially be in conflict with each other, as long as the activities of the member's business are managed so as to avoid the work on behalf of one client adversely affecting that on behalf of another. Where a member believes that the situation can be managed, appropriate and adequate disclosure should be made to the parties concerned, together with details of any proposed safeguards to preserve confidentiality and manage such conflict.

d. The public interest should be a factor that all members should bear in mind when accepting any assignment or appointment.

e. Members should be aware of the difficulties which may arise from the offer or acceptance of any gift, favour or hospitality that may be intended to influence the recipient or which could be interpreted by a reasonable person in full possession of the facts as likely to have that effect.

f. Any report for which a member is responsible, whether it bears his or her signature or not, should be prepared with integrity and objectivity. This means, for example, that while a report may properly present one side of a case and may present that case to its best advantage, the report should be accurate, truthful and, within its scope, both complete and balanced. It should not rely on ambiguities or half-truths, but should be objectively justifiable and should not be based on unreasonable assumptions.

g. A member engaging an individual or firm to undertake work on behalf of a client should ascertain that the individual or firm complies with the ethical standards of the Institute.

8. Members operating as consultants or as partners or principals in companies offering fire safety and related services shall be required to comply with this code of ethics and in addition, should operate their businesses to the highest ethical standards.

a. The business of a member should be so conducted that a client or potential client cannot mistake it for any other firm or business.

b. A member should not enter into arrangements to provide services to clients of another firm unless satisfied that the requesting firm's professional work is in accordance with ethical standards governing members of the Institute.

c. A member must not make derogatory references to or unfavourable comparisons with the services of other Institute members or their employers.

d. The name adopted by a member for his practice or for a business must not be designed or calculated to mislead potential customers or others.

9. Members are required to maintain complete confidentiality about their dealings with customers, unless specifically authorised to reveal information by the individual customers involved or there is a legal requirement or professional duty to disclose information.

a. Members acquiring or receiving confidential information in the course of their professional work should neither use nor appear to use that information for their personal advantage or the advantage of a third party.

b. When members change their employment they are entitled to use the experience gained in their previous employment but not confidential information of any description acquired or received by them in the course of the previous employment.

c. Members are reminded that in certain circumstances it may be a criminal act to use confidential information for an improper purpose.

DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

10. If the Institute comes to learn that a member has or may have brought the Institute or the fire safety profession or industry into disrepute, whether through business or personal actions, the matter will be considered by an Ethics Committee appointed by the Council of the Institute. If the Committee considers the matter to be of such seriousness it may require the member and other appropriate persons to appear before it. The Committee, having heard the details of the matter, may recommend to the Council that the member should be:

- a. Struck off the Roll of Members of the Institute, and members of the Institute and others informed accordingly, or
- b. Suspension from being a member of the Institute for such time as may be determined by the Ethics Committee, or
- c. Receive a reprimand about his or her conduct, with a warning that any further unethical action will lead to a greater penalty.

11. A member asked to appear before the Ethics Committee of the Institute may ask to be accompanied by a friend or advisor save that the advisor may not address the committee directly unless the Chairman of the Committee shall agree to this.

12. Any appeal against a decision of the Ethics Committee must be submitted to the Secretary General of the Institute in writing within seven days of the delivery of the decision to the member.

13. Should the Council of the Institute consider that there are grounds for hearing an appeal the Chairman of the Council, The President or one of the Vice Presidents and one other Council member shall convene to hear the appeal. The appellant may be assisted as in (11) above.

14. The decision of the Appeal Committee shall be final.

PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS ABOUT DISCIPLINARY PROCESS

15. The Institute regards the maintenance of the highest professional standards as its most important function and considers that protection of the public good to be an objective for which it should strive. It follows that when a member is adjudged to have failed to maintain such standards it may be in the public interest for this judgement to be promulgated widely.

16. The following information applies to any announcement under the disciplinary process of the Institute concerning the affairs of a member, whether the member is named in the announcement or not.

17. In order to comply with the rules of the Institute, any public announcement about a disciplinary process:

- a. Must be confined to the consideration of the relevant Committee of the Institute of either any matter relating to or connected with the carrying out by the Institute of functions assumed by it or of any complaint about a member or company employing a member or a company managed or directed by a member, and
- b. Must be involved in a matter of public concern.

18. What amounts to a matter of public concern is largely subjective and a matter for judgement at the time, but the following will always be a matter of public concern:

- a. The collapse, with substantial loss of funds, of a listed or other public interest company or public body.
- b. Unlawful activity by a member or which has come to public notice, whether in the United Kingdom or overseas whether resulting in a criminal conviction or not.
- c. Any other matter in which the conduct of a member is the subject of criticism from an official body or gives rise to widespread critical comment.
- d. Except where it is insubstantial, unsupported by evidence or manifestly unsound any complaint in which a member of the Council of the Institute or any of its committees is personally concerned or any complaint that the Institute or any of its officers, committees or officials has acted corruptly, improperly or negligently.
- e. The failure by a member or company owned or operated by a member to exercise due diligence and proper professional standards which results in loss of life or major damage following a fire.

19. No announcement will name or otherwise identify a member unless this is necessary or desirable in order to maintain public confidence in the Institute, its members or the fire safety discipline. It may be necessary or desirable to name a member or the name of a member's company or employer:

- a. Where failure to do so would defeat the purpose of the announcement (for example, because it would not be possible to relate the announcement to the subject of the public concern); or
- b. Where the name is already a matter of public knowledge.

20. Save where urgent action is desirable to maintain confidence in the profession or the Institute or its members, any member to be named in an announcement will be given, not less than 48 hours before the promulgation of the announcement, a copy of the announcement.

21. Any announcement or other statement promulgated by the Institute will be accompanied by and include a section briefly describing this code and the disciplinary arrangements of the Institute.

22. Once an announcement has been made, no further statement will be made prior to the conclusion of any investigation, save:

- a. In explanation of the procedures of the Institute following a finding of not proved; or
- b. When an appeal against a finding is upheld; or
- c. Unless circumstances change in such a way as to make the original announcement incorrect or misleading.

23. It is a requirement of the Institute that all members must abide by this Code of Ethics and Discipline.