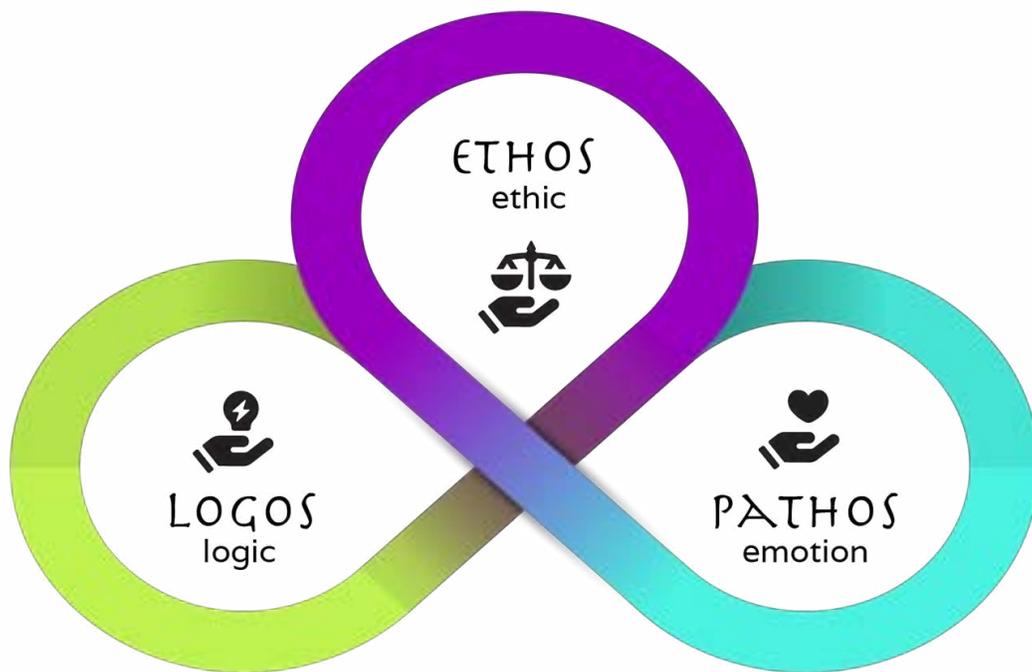


Logos, Ethos, Pathos

Influencing ethical practice in occupational safety and health



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Readers are encouraged to consult the most current and authoritative versions of the referenced codes of ethics and to seek appropriate professional or legal counsel when navigating ethical dilemmas in practice. This work aims to foster critical reflection and professional dialogue, not to replace organizational or legal requirements. The inclusion of ethical interpretations should not be construed as prescriptive, and professionals should exercise their own judgment in accordance with values, applicable laws, and organizational policies.

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Exploring Safety Professional Ethics

Ethics and Morality

According to *Ethics for Dummies*, while the dictionary definitions of "ethics" and "morality" differ, the book treats them as essentially interchangeable. The authors emphasize that debates over distinctions are less useful than focusing on the core shared principle: both ethics and morality concern "what you ought to be doing with your life" (*Ethics for Dummies*, 2010, p. 11).

They explain that if an action is considered immoral or unethical, the implication is the same—"you ought not to do it." The text notes, "Your ethical conversations will make a lot more progress if you just concentrate on the 'oughtness' of things" (p. 11). Therefore, for the purposes of ethical discourse, this resource suggests emphasizing normative behavior—what is required, permitted, or forbidden—rather than splitting hairs over terminology.

Ethics serves as the moral compass of professional conduct—guiding decisions, behaviors, and relationships within the occupational safety and health (OSH) field. At its core, ethics in OSH encompasses the values and principles that prioritize the protection of human life, promote integrity, ensure transparency, and foster trust among stakeholders. It is not merely about compliance with rules but involves reflective, principled decision-making in complex, real-world situations where lives, livelihoods, and communities are at stake.

As defined by leading professional bodies, ethics is both a framework and a lived practice. The **American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP)** describes its Code of Professional Conduct as "an ethical benchmark for our members," affirming its role in reinforcing accountability and trust within safety practice (ASSP, 2024, p. 1). The **Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP)** aligns with this view, emphasizing ethics as a vital means of maintaining "the integrity, honor, and prestige of the profession" (BCSP, 2023, p. 1). Similarly, the **Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (BCRSP)** underscores the importance of maintaining "high standards of integrity and competence" in the execution of professional duties (BCRSP, 2022, p. 1). Other professional bodies reinforce these standards while adding distinct emphases. The **Board for Global EHS Credentialing (BGC)** defines ethics as a professional obligation to "protect public health, safety, and the environment" by ensuring sound, evidence-based decision-making (BGC, 2020, p. 1). The **American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA)** stresses the ethical imperative of maintaining honesty, scientific rigor, and a commitment to public welfare, particularly in the evaluation and control of workplace hazards (AIHA, 2024, p. 1). Likewise, the **Australian Institute of Health & Safety (AIHS)** encourages practitioners to engage in continuous ethical reflection, advocating for the integration of personal and professional ethics through critical reasoning (AIHS, 2020, p. 2).

Ethics is not limited to any one nation or regulatory environment; it is a globally recognized dimension of professional identity. The **International Commission on**

Occupational Health (ICOH) highlights that ethics should be understood as a “multidisciplinary and participatory process,” dynamic and essential for navigating the complexities of modern occupational health (ICOH, 2012, p. 1). This viewpoint affirms that ethics is not static—it evolves as new challenges emerge and as expectations for social responsibility, environmental stewardship, and worker rights expand.

A suitable definition for **Occupational Safety and Health Professional Ethics** may be:

Occupational safety and health professional ethics refer to the moral principles, guidelines, and standards of conduct that govern the actions and decisions of professionals responsible for protecting the health, safety, and welfare of workers, the public, and the environment. It emphasizes maintaining integrity, competence, confidentiality, fairness, impartiality, and accountability, ensuring that professional judgment prioritizes the well-being of individuals and communities above personal, financial, or organizational interests.

Purpose of This Work

This work aims to synthesize these diverse perspectives into a coherent, accessible framework for safety professionals, educators, and organizational leaders. Through the comparative analysis of thirteen internationally recognized codes of ethics and conduct, ten overarching ethical themes have been distilled to capture the essence of professional responsibility in the safety field. These themes serve as the foundation for ethical engagement, decision-making, and leadership in a variety of work environments—from industrial operations and healthcare settings to public institutions and global supply chains.

Navigating the Chapters Ahead

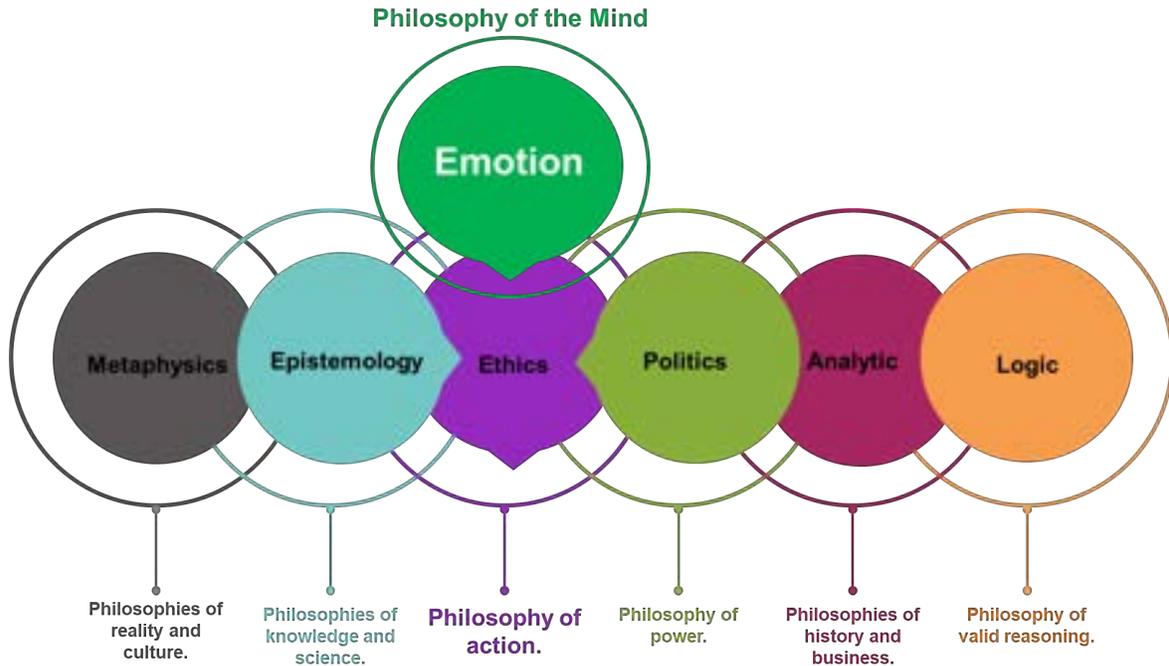
Subsequent chapters explore each of these ten ethical themes in detail, offering illustrative scenarios, ethical dilemmas, and practical tools for ethical reflection. The framework does not seek to replace existing codes but rather to unify and amplify their shared moral foundations. Each theme is contextualized with direct quotations from the source codes and evaluated through relevant ethical theories, including deontology, utilitarianism, virtue ethics, and care ethics.

In doing so, this work offers both a theoretical foundation and a practical guide. It invites OSH professionals to see ethics not as an external obligation but as a core professional capacity—one that must be cultivated, examined, and enacted in service to human dignity, justice, and well-being



Philosophical Context

Philosophical Context



Theoretical Foundations of Valid Moral Positions

Valid moral positions are ethically grounded stances or frameworks that provide justifiable and coherent bases for evaluating actions, decisions, or policies. In the context of professional safety practice, *valid moral positions* are those that:

1. **Align with established ethical theories or traditions**, such as deontology, consequentialism, virtue ethics, rights-based theories, or care ethics.
2. **Are internally consistent**, meaning they offer coherent reasoning and do not rely on contradiction or arbitrary distinctions.
3. **Are broadly recognized by ethical, professional, or legal standards**, such as codes of conduct, organizational policies, and international safety frameworks.
4. **Support human dignity, justice, and well-being**, which are core ethical aims across professional safety disciplines.
5. **Can be reasonably defended to others**, including stakeholders, peers, or the public, as part of transparent and accountable decision-making.

Aristotle doesn't use the modern term "valid moral positions," but he develops the idea of *what makes actions ethically justifiable* through the lens of virtue. For Aristotle, a morally right action is one that aligns with the "golden mean" between extremes and is performed by a person of good character acting knowingly, voluntarily, and for the right reasons.

In essence, valid moral positions help safety professionals justify *why* a decision is right or responsible—not merely by reference to rules or outcomes alone, but through broader ethical reasoning. These positions ensure that actions are not only compliant but principled, promoting trust, fairness, and integrity in the pursuit of occupational health and safety.

In philosophy, some of the major ethical frameworks that define what might be considered valid moral positions. Each term captures a slightly different nuance or emphasis within the broader ethical framework it represents.

Ethical Theories

Ethical theory provides the philosophical backbone for evaluating and justifying valid moral positions. For safety professionals, these theories are not abstract—they are practical lenses through which real-world decisions are made. Each theory contributes distinct criteria for what constitutes ethical behavior in occupational settings.

Deontological Ethics (Duty-Based)

Deontology, notably advanced by Immanuel Kant, holds that actions are morally right when they adhere to rules, duties, or obligations, regardless of outcomes. This theory is highly relevant to OSH professionals who are often bound by codes, standards, and regulations. For example, a safety officer refusing to bypass a lockout/tagout procedure, even under pressure to save time, is acting on deontological grounds. The moral position is valid because it aligns with duty—protecting life and adhering to regulatory obligations.

Utilitarianism (Consequence-Based)

Popularized by philosophers like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, utilitarianism posits that the right action is the one that maximizes overall well-being or minimizes harm. This is particularly relevant when safety professionals must evaluate trade-offs, such as introducing a costly safety measure that significantly reduces risk. In these cases, a valid moral stance prioritizes the greatest good for the greatest number—often workers' long-term health and safety over short-term profits.

Virtue Ethics (Character-Based)

Rooted in Aristotelian philosophy, virtue ethics shifts focus from rules or outcomes to the character and moral habits of the individual. Key virtues include honesty, courage, temperance, and wisdom. For OSH professionals, adopting a valid moral position means embodying these traits. A safety manager who consistently speaks up about systemic risks—even when unpopular—is practicing the virtue of courage and integrity, shaping a culture of ethical responsibility.

Care Ethics (Relationship-Based)

Emerging from feminist philosophy and the work of thinkers like Carol Gilligan and Joan Tronto, care ethics emphasizes empathy, compassion, and attention to relational contexts. In the safety field, this theory validates moral positions that prioritize the vulnerabilities of workers—such as ensuring psychosocial safety, listening to frontline concerns, or tailoring programs for at-risk populations. It underscores a professional's moral responsibility to care for others not merely as a duty, but as a relational commitment.

Rights-Based Ethics

This theory asserts that individuals have inherent moral and legal rights that must be respected. These include rights to life, bodily integrity, and freedom from harm—central to the OSH profession. A valid moral position under rights-based ethics might involve defending a worker's right to refuse unsafe work, even when such refusal creates

operational complications. Upholding these rights affirms the safety professional's role as a guardian of human dignity and workplace justice.

Social Contract Theory

Rooted in the works of Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, social contract theory suggests that moral and political obligations are dependent upon an agreement to form a society. In the safety profession, this translates into the implicit contract between employers, employees, and society to ensure health and safety as a fundamental workplace expectation. A safety professional who argues for systemic reform after a major incident may be invoking this theory—framing safety as a shared social obligation.

Together, these theories offer a robust set of tools for evaluating and articulating valid moral positions. They help professionals clarify whether their actions are justified by duty, consequence, virtue, care, or rights. Importantly, the most defensible ethical positions in OSH typically reflect an integration of these theories—ensuring not only legal compliance and operational efficiency but also moral leadership, relational integrity, and social trust.

Natural Law Ethics (Universal)

Thomas Aquinas: "Good is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided. All other precepts of the natural law are based upon this."

Cicero: "True law is right reason in agreement with nature; it is of universal application, unchanging and everlasting."

Aristotle: "What is just by nature is not always the same as what is just by law."

Natural law theory is based on the idea that there are objective and universal moral principles inherent the nature of humans and the world. A natural law perspective might emphasize the inherent value of human life and well-being. An OSH professional would be expected to protect these values in the workplace, seeing this as a fundamental moral duty.

Universal or inherent rights ethics highlight the belief in inherent moral rights, this phrase closely relates to the principles of natural law ethics. OSH practices would be seen as part of the natural order of ensuring the well-being and flourishing of individuals in the workplace. This could involve framing safety and health regulations as aligning with the natural rights of workers and the inherent duty of employers.

Natural Law Ethics, with its emphasis on universal moral principles derived from human nature and reason, can significantly influence the approach of Occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals. Applications may include:

Inherent Rights and Dignity of Workers: Natural Law Ethics posits that certain rights are inherent to human nature. OSH professionals can use this perspective to advocate for the fundamental rights of workers to a safe and healthy work environment, treating these rights as intrinsic and non-negotiable.

Universal Moral Principles in Safety: The universal principles in Natural Law Ethics, such as the duty to protect life and promote well-being, can guide OSH professionals in developing and implementing safety standards that are universally applicable and ethically grounded.

Rational Basis for Safety Protocols: Natural Law Ethics emphasizes reason as a tool for understanding moral truths. OSH professionals can use rational analysis to develop and justify safety protocols, ensuring they are logically sound and ethically justifiable.

Ethical Justification of Safety Measures: OSH practices and policies can be grounded in the ethical imperatives derived from Natural Law, such as the duty to preserve life and prevent harm. This provides a strong moral foundation for safety initiatives.

Moral Responsibility Beyond Legal Compliance: While compliance with legal standards is essential, Natural Law Ethics encourages OSH professionals to go beyond

mere legal compliance, considering the broader moral implications of their decisions and actions.

Consistency in Ethical Standards: The universal nature of Natural Law principles can help ensure consistency in ethical standards across different contexts and situations in workplace safety, avoiding relativistic approaches.

Balancing Rights and Responsibilities: Natural Law Ethics provides a framework for balancing the rights of workers with the responsibilities of employers, fostering an environment where safety is a shared concern.

Addressing Ethical Dilemmas: In complex situations where moral dilemmas arise, Natural Law Ethics offers a stable reference point, enabling OSH professionals to make decisions based on established moral principles.

Promoting a Culture of Ethical Awareness: By grounding safety practices in Natural Law Ethics, OSH professionals can promote a workplace culture that values ethical awareness and moral reasoning in addressing safety issues.

Human-Centric Approach to Safety: Natural Law Ethics places human beings and their welfare at the center of moral consideration, guiding OSH professionals to prioritize human-centric approaches in all safety-related matters.

Applying Natural Law Ethics in OSH practices ensures that decisions and actions are not only legally compliant and effective but also morally sound, resonating with the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals in the workplace.

An OSH ethical code from the natural law perspective might state,

"We recognize and uphold the inherent rights of every worker to a safe and healthy workplace, guided by universally accepted principles of human dignity and safety."

"Respect the natural rights of workers to safety and health in the workplace."

"We uphold the natural rights of workers to a safe and healthy environment as a fundamental ethical principle."

"Adhere to the principles of natural justice and rights in promoting workplace safety and health."



An applied natural law to OSH professional conduct guidelines could include,

"Ensure that all safety practices align with the fundamental human rights and dignity of all workers."

"Align our safety and health policies with the inherent dignity and rights of every individual in the workplace."

"Ensure that OSH practices are in harmony with the inherent human rights and dignity of every worker."

"In our professional actions, we will consistently respect and protect the fundamental rights of employees to safety and health, ensuring these rights are central to all workplace safety decisions and practices."

Rule-Based Ethics (Deontology)

Immanuel Kant: "Duty is the necessity of an action executed from respect for the law."

John Rawls: "Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought."

Christine Korsgaard: "The reason you ought to do something which morality requires of you is that in some way your own humanity, or the humanity of someone else, will be damaged or destroyed if you do not."

Duty, rights, or rule-based ethics emphasizes the role of duty or obligation in ethical decision-making, aligning closely with the central concept of deontology. Deontology is concerned with duty and adherence to rules. This theory asserts that actions are morally right due to their characteristics rather than their consequences. This approach argues that the morality of an action is determined by whether it adheres to a set of rules or duties, regardless of the consequences. OSH professionals may adhere to deontological ethics by following industry standards and regulations strictly, treating these rules as moral imperatives regardless of the consequences, to ensure the safety and well-being of all workers.

From a Kantian ethical perspective, OSH practices would be grounded in duty and the adherence to moral rules, such as the right of workers to a safe workplace. This could involve adhering strictly to safety regulations and ethical standards, regardless of the cost or impact on productivity, because it's the right thing to do. A deontological code would stress the importance of duty and rule-following. An OSH professional might be required to adhere strictly to safety regulations and legal standards, regardless of the context or consequences.

The application of rule-based ethics in the context of Occupational safety and health (OSH) is particularly relevant and practical. Rule-based ethics, also known as deontological ethics, focuses on adherence to established rules, principles, and duties regardless of the outcome. Here's how this approach can be beneficial for OSH professionals:

Adherence to Safety Regulations and Standards: Rule-based ethics aligns perfectly with the fundamental aspect of OSH professional work, which is adherence to established safety regulations and standards. OSH professionals are expected to follow and enforce these regulations consistently.

Ethical Consistency: By adhering to a set of defined rules and principles, OSH professionals can ensure consistency in their decision-making process. This consistency is crucial for maintaining fairness and integrity in safety practices.

Clear Guidelines for Conduct: Rule-based ethics provides clear guidelines for professional conduct, which is essential in situations that require quick decision-making. Knowing and following established rules can guide OSH professionals in taking appropriate actions swiftly and efficiently.

Moral Clarity and Certainty: This approach offers moral clarity and certainty, as the rules and principles provide a clear directive on what is right and wrong in occupational safety and health contexts.

Professional Accountability: Rule-based ethics holds OSH professionals accountable to a high standard of ethical practice. It underscores their duty to protect workers and ensure safe working conditions.

Building Trust: Consistent application of rules and ethical standards helps in building trust among employees and management. Workers are more likely to trust OSH professionals who are known for their strict adherence to safety rules and ethical principles.

Prevention of Bias and Discrimination: By focusing on rules and principles, this approach can help prevent personal biases and discrimination in safety practices, ensuring that all decisions are made based on standardized criteria.

Legal Compliance: Rule-based ethics in OSH also aligns with legal compliance. By adhering to established standards and laws, OSH professionals help their organizations avoid legal issues and penalties related to safety violations.

Responsibility to Enforce Safety Measures: This approach reinforces the responsibility of OSH professionals to not only comply with safety regulations but also to enforce these measures within their organizations actively.

Framework for Training and Education: Rule-based ethics provides a solid framework for the training and education of employees in safety practices. It helps in instilling a sense of duty and responsibility towards following safety protocols.

Compliance or rule-based ethics provides a robust framework for OSH professionals, emphasizing the importance of adherence to established safety rules and ethical principles. This approach ensures consistency, legal compliance, moral clarity, and professional integrity in managing workplace safety and health.

An OSH professional ethics code influenced by deontology might include,

"Adhere strictly to legal standards and professional guidelines, regardless of the consequences."

"We are committed to our duty of ensuring a safe and healthy work environment for all employees."

"Our duty is to uphold the intrinsic right of every worker to a safe and healthy workplace, irrespective of the financial or operational implications."

"Uphold the fundamental rights of workers to a safe and healthy work environment, guided by principles rather than consequences."

An applied OSH Professional Conduct directive might be,

"Follow all safety protocols and report violations without exception, irrespective of personal or organizational interests."

"Adhere strictly to all safety regulations and ethical standards, even in the face of challenging or costly circumstances."

"Consistently follow established safety standards and ethical guidelines, regardless of external pressures or consequences."

"Adherence to established safety rules and guidelines is the cornerstone of our ethical practice."

"We will rigorously follow and enforce all relevant safety regulations and standards in every aspect of our work."

Results-Based Ethics (Consequentialism)

Jeremy Bentham: "It is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong."

John Stuart Mill: "Actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness."

Marcus Aurelius: "Waste no more time arguing about what a good man should be. Be one."

Consequentialism focuses on the outcomes or consequences of actions. This is the view that morality is all about producing the right kinds of overall consequences. Utilitarianism, which suggests that actions are morally right if they maximize happiness or well-being. Safety professionals might use utilitarian principles to ensure that their actions lead to the greatest good for the greatest number of people, such as minimizing harm and accidents in the workplace.

Outcome or results-based ethics emphasizes the importance of the results or outcomes of actions in determining their moral value. For instance, implementing safety measures that benefit the most workers, even if it incurs additional investments for the company. Safety interventions would be judged based on their effectiveness in reducing workplace injuries and illnesses, thus increasing the overall happiness and well-being of the workforce.

The applicability of results-based ethics, also known as consequentialism, in occupational health and safety focuses on the outcomes or consequences of actions and decisions. This approach can be particularly influential in shaping OSH practices:

Emphasis on Outcomes: Results-based ethics prioritizes the consequences of safety interventions. OSH professionals adopting this approach would focus on implementing measures that have proven to effectively reduce workplace accidents and illnesses.

Data-Driven Decision Making: This approach aligns with a data-driven methodology, where decisions are based on statistical analysis and empirical evidence of what works best in enhancing workplace safety and health.

Cost-Benefit Analysis: Results-based ethics in OSH often involves cost-benefit analyses, where actions are evaluated based on their effectiveness in improving safety relative to their cost.

Flexibility in Approach: Unlike strict adherence to rules, results-based ethics allows OSH professionals to be more flexible in their approach, adapting and modifying safety strategies based on their effectiveness.

Continual Improvement: This approach encourages continual monitoring and improvement of safety practices, as it is essential to evaluate the results of these practices regularly.

Innovation and Experimentation: Results-based ethics can drive innovation, as it encourages the exploration of new and potentially more effective methods for enhancing workplace safety.

Accountability for Safety Outcomes: OSH professionals are held accountable for the real-world outcomes of their safety measures, which can drive a more committed and proactive approach to workplace safety.

Employee Engagement and Feedback: Understanding the impact of safety measures can involve gathering feedback from employees, thus promoting worker engagement and participation in safety programs.

Balancing Short-term and Long-term Results: In results-based ethics, OSH professionals must balance short-term safety improvements with long-term health outcomes, ensuring that immediate gains do not lead to future risks.

Moral Complexity in Decision Making: This approach acknowledges the moral complexity in decision-making, as it requires evaluating various potential outcomes and their impacts on workers' health and safety.

Outcome or results-based ethics encourages OSH professionals to focus on the reality of what works, constantly adapting and improving safety measures based on their effectiveness in reducing risks and enhancing the overall well-being of employees. This pragmatic and outcome-oriented approach can lead to more effective and dynamic OSH practices.

An OSH professional ethical code under this theory could state,

"Our ethical duty is to achieve clear, positive outcomes in workplace safety and health."

"We commit to ensuring the greatest safety and health benefits for the largest number of employees through our actions and decisions."

"Commit to actions that achieve the highest level of overall health and safety for the workforce."

"We prioritize strategies that demonstrably enhance worker safety and health."

Applied OSH professional conduct results-based guidance might state,

"Decisions will be guided by their effectiveness in reducing workplace hazards and improving employee well-being."

"Evaluate all safety measures based on their potential to prevent workplace accidents and harm."

"Prioritize safety measures and interventions that demonstrably reduce workplace injuries and illnesses, thereby maximizing overall employee welfare."

"Evaluate safety initiatives based on their effectiveness in preventing harm and promoting the well-being of the majority."

"Our actions are driven by a commitment to achieving measurable improvements in workplace safety."

Virtue Ethics (Aristotelian)

Aristotle: "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit."

Elizabeth Anscombe: "It is not profitable for us at present to do moral philosophy; that should be laid aside at any rate until we have an adequate philosophy of psychology."

Hannah Arendt: "The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil."

Plato: "Good people do not need laws to tell them to act responsibly, while bad people will find a way around the laws."

Character or virtue ethics highlights the focus on the character of the moral agent rather than on rules or outcomes. In OSH professional ethics this approach emphasizes the character and virtues of the OSH professional. This perspective focuses on the inherent character of a person rather than on specific actions. A morally valid position, from this viewpoint, is one that is consistent with virtuous characteristics like courage, honesty, and compassion.

In virtue ethics, the focus is about cultivating virtues such as responsibility, care, and diligence among employers and employees. Decision-making in OSH would center on what a virtuous person would do, promoting a culture of safety and responsibility.

A virtuous code might emphasize diligence, responsibility, and empathy. For instance, an OSH professional is expected to diligently inspect workplaces, responsibly report hazards, and empathize with the concerns of employees regarding their safety.

The application of virtue ethics to Occupational safety and health (OSH) offers a distinctive and integrated approach. Virtue ethics focuses on the character and virtues of the moral agent - in this case, the OSH professional - rather than solely on the consequences of actions or adherence to rules. Applications may include:

Emphasis on Professional Character: Virtue ethics prioritizes the development of good character traits such as honesty, integrity, responsibility, and diligence. For OSH professionals, this means consistently embodying these virtues in their work, leading by example, and fostering a culture of ethical behavior.

Ethical Decision-Making: Decisions in OSH are not only based on legal compliance or cost-benefit analyses but also on what a virtuous professional would do in a given situation. This involves considering the welfare of workers, the impact of decisions on all stakeholders, and the long-term consequences for health and safety.

Promoting a Culture of Care and Respect: Virtue ethics aligns with creating a workplace culture that values care, respect, and empathy. This involves not only ensuring physical safety but also paying attention to the psychological well-being of employees.

Moral Leadership: OSH professionals can serve as moral leaders, influencing others through their demonstration of virtuous behavior. This includes being proactive in addressing potential hazards, being fair and just in assessments, and showing genuine concern for the well-being of workers.

Building Trust: By consistently demonstrating virtuous behaviors, OSH professionals can build trust with employees and management. Trust is crucial for effective communication and cooperation in matters of safety and health.

Long-term Perspective: Virtue ethics encourages looking beyond immediate outcomes to the long-term impacts of decisions and actions. In OSH, this means implementing strategies and practices that sustainably protect worker health and safety.

Holistic Approach to Safety: Virtue ethics considers the whole person, which in OSH translates to addressing not just physical safety but also the mental and emotional aspects of workers' well-being.

Responsiveness to Ethical Dilemmas: In complex situations where there may be no clear legal or procedural guidance, virtue ethics provides a framework for OSH professionals to navigate ethical dilemmas based on virtues and moral principles.

Adaptive and Dynamic Approach: Given that virtue ethics is not rigidly rule-based, it allows OSH professionals flexibility and adaptability in their approach, enabling them to respond effectively to diverse and changing workplace environments.

Continuous Improvement: Virtue ethics in OSH also means a commitment to continuous personal and professional development, always striving to better oneself and, by extension, to improve the health and safety standards of the workplace.

Incorporating virtue ethics into OSH practices offers a comprehensive framework that focuses on the character and virtues of professionals, fostering an ethical, respectful, and caring approach to workplace safety and health.

An ethical code based on virtue ethics might state,

"OSH professionals should cultivate virtues such as diligence, honesty, and compassion in their work."

"We strive to embody virtues such as responsibility, care, and diligence in all our OSH practices."

"We commit to fostering excellence in moral character, emphasizing virtues such as integrity, responsibility, and compassion in all aspects of occupational safety and health."

An applied OSH Professional Conduct guideline might include,

"Always act with integrity and strive for excellence in all safety assessments and interventions."

"Consistently act in a manner that reflects a commitment to the highest standards of safety and health, fostering a culture of responsibility and ethical behavior."

"In our professional conduct, we will exemplify virtues such as diligence, fairness, and empathy, ensuring that our actions consistently reflect the highest standards of ethical behavior in workplace safety."

Ethics of Care

Carol Gilligan: "The moral question is not what you would do facing a dilemma; it's how you treat the people involved."

Nel Noddings: "When we care for someone, we should do what we can to increase his or her happiness and diminish his or her suffering."

Annette Baier: "Trust is accepted vulnerability to another's possible but expected goodwill (or competence or honesty)."

Compassionate or care ethics is based on the idea of interpersonal relationships directly referencing the emphasis on care in moral decision-making. Ethics of care doctrine focus on the role of compassion and empathy in moral behavior. This ethical theory emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and the ethics of care. Care ethics emphasizes the importance of relationships and responsibility to others, which aligns with the safety professional's role in caring for the safety, health, and well-being of workers.

Care ethics would prioritize relationships and empathy in OSH. This would involve understanding the specific needs and circumstances of individual workers and responding to them with compassion and care. Policies and practices would be evaluated based on how they affect the well-being and care of workers, particularly the most vulnerable. A care ethics approach would stress the importance of building trust with employees, understanding their specific needs, and ensuring a supportive work environment. An OSH professional might prioritize open communication and employee well-being in their practices.

The application of care ethics in the field of Occupational safety and health (OSH) can significantly enhance the approach and practices of OSH professionals. Care ethics, which emphasizes empathy, relational understanding, and the moral significance of responding to the needs of others, offers a framework that is particularly well-suited to the goals of OSH. Here's how it can be applied:

Empathy and Understanding: Care ethics promotes an empathetic approach where OSH professionals actively seek to understand the individual circumstances, concerns, and needs of workers. This approach fosters a more inclusive and worker-centered safety culture.

Relationship Building: The focus on relationships is crucial in OSH. By building strong relationships with workers, OSH professionals can create an environment of trust and open communication, encouraging workers to share concerns and participate actively in safety programs.

Responsive Safety Measures: Care ethics involves being responsive to the specific needs of individuals. In OSH, this means tailoring safety protocols and interventions to address the unique aspects of different roles, environments, and individual worker needs.

Moral Commitment to Worker Well-being: Care ethics reinforces the moral obligation of OSH professionals to prioritize the well-being of workers. This ethical stance goes beyond mere compliance with regulations, emphasizing a genuine commitment to the health and safety of each individual.

Collaborative Approach to Safety: Care ethics encourages collaboration between OSH professionals, workers, and management. By involving all stakeholders in discussions and decisions about workplace safety, a more effective and caring approach to risk management can be developed.

Proactive Identification of Risks: A care-based approach involves being attentive to the early signs of potential risks or issues, particularly those that may affect the most vulnerable workers. This proactive stance can help in preventing accidents and health issues.

Supportive Workplace Culture: Care ethics can guide OSH professionals in fostering a supportive and caring workplace culture. This includes not just physical safety, but also addressing mental health, stress, and the overall well-being of employees.

Ethical Leadership: In embodying care ethics, OSH professionals can lead by example, demonstrating the importance of care and concern for others in the workplace. This can inspire a broader cultural shift within the organization.

Inclusive Safety Policies: Care ethics compels OSH professionals to consider the diverse needs of a varied workforce, including temporary workers, those with disabilities, and other marginalized groups, ensuring that safety policies are inclusive and equitable.

Conflict Resolution: The principles of care ethics can be effective in resolving conflicts by focusing on understanding, empathy, and finding solutions that address the concerns of all parties involved.

Incorporating care ethics into OSH practices provides a comprehensive and compassionate framework, ensuring that safety and health management is not only about preventing harm but also about actively caring for the well-being of every individual in the workplace.

An OSH ethical code from an ethics of care perspective might state,

"We are committed to understanding and responding to the individual needs and circumstances of workers with empathy and compassion."

"Embrace individual autonomy and responsibility in creating and upholding safe working environments."

"We commit to a care-centered approach in our work, prioritizing empathy, understanding, and responsiveness to the individual needs and well-being of every worker."

"We prioritize empathy and responsiveness to each worker's needs and well-being."

An applied ethics of care to OSH professional conduct guidelines could include,

"In our professional practice, we shall actively nurture a workplace environment where care, compassion, and attentive concern for each employee's health and safety are paramount."

"Prioritize the care and well-being of all employees, with special attention to the needs of the most vulnerable, in all safety and health initiatives."

"Support and encourage independent and responsible decision-making in all aspects of workplace safety."

"Our practice will reflect care and compassion, focusing on the health and safety of every employee."

Collective Decision-Making Ethics (Contractualism)

John Dewey: "The very heart of the democratic process is cooperative deliberation and effort."

John Locke: "Men being, as has been said, by nature, all free, equal, and independent, no one can be put out of this estate, and subjected to the political power of another, without his own consent."

Onora O'Neill: "The task of ethics is not to provide definitive answers, but to clarify choices."

Consent-based ethics emphasizes the role of mutual consent in forming moral rules and obligations, aligning closely with contractualism principles. Cooperative or collective decision-making ethics focus on agreements made by groups or societies to establish moral norms. Contractualism theory suggests that moral norms derive their validity from the idea of a social contract agreed upon by all individuals living within a society. This approach would view OSH practices as part of a social contract between employers and employees, where safe working conditions are a mutual obligation. Employers and employees would work together to establish fair and effective safety policies and practices, considering the interests and well-being of all parties.

Applying the principles of collective decision-making ethics to Occupational safety and health (OSH) can significantly enhance the field's approach to ensuring a safe and healthy work environment. This ethical framework, which emphasizes shared decision-making processes and the inclusion of diverse perspectives, offers several benefits:

Inclusive Safety Strategies: Collective decision-making in OSH allows for the inclusion of diverse viewpoints, including those of different employee groups, management, and OSH professionals. This inclusivity can lead to more comprehensive and effective safety strategies that address a wide range of needs and risks.

Enhanced Worker Engagement: By involving employees in the decision-making process, OSH professionals can foster greater worker engagement and commitment to safety practices. Employees who feel their voices are heard are more likely to be proactive in following safety protocols and identifying potential hazards.

Democratic and Fair Process: Adopting a collective approach to decision-making in OSH ensures that the process is democratic and considers the welfare of all stakeholders. This can enhance the fairness and acceptance of safety policies and measures.

Improved Risk Identification and Management: Collective decision-making can lead to more effective identification and management of workplace risks. Different

stakeholders may bring unique insights into potential hazards and effective mitigation strategies.

Conflict Resolution: This approach can also be beneficial in resolving conflicts related to safety issues. When all parties have a say in the decision-making process, solutions are more likely to be balanced and acceptable to all involved.

Building a Safety Culture: Collective decision-making contributes to building a strong safety culture within an organization. It promotes a sense of shared responsibility and collective action towards maintaining a safe working environment.

Adaptability and Innovation: Involving a range of perspectives can lead to more innovative and adaptable safety solutions. Different stakeholders might contribute novel ideas and approaches that an individual decision-maker might not consider.

Responsiveness to Change: Collective decision-making can make OSH practices more responsive to changing circumstances. Group input can quickly identify where adjustments are needed and collaboratively develop appropriate responses.

Enhanced Credibility and Trust: When decisions are made collectively, the process and outcomes tend to be more transparent, enhancing the credibility of OSH professionals and building trust among employees.

Moral and Ethical Responsibility: This approach aligns with the ethical responsibility of OSH professionals to ensure that all voices are heard, especially those who might be most affected by safety policies.

Collective decision-making ethics in OSH encourages shared responsibility, diverse inputs, and democratic processes, leading to more effective, fair, and inclusive safety and health practices in the workplace.

An ethical code based on contractualism might state,

"We recognize our mutual obligations to employers and employees in creating and maintaining safe working environments."

"Honor the social contract between the employer and employees, ensuring equitable safety practices."

"We commit to respecting and upholding the principle of informed consent, ensuring that all safety measures and health decisions involve the active participation and agreement of our employees."

"We dedicate ourselves to fostering a spirit of cooperation, working collaboratively with employees and management to develop and implement effective safety and health strategies."

"We are committed to promoting collective decision-making processes, ensuring that safety and health policies in the workplace are shaped by the diverse voices and perspectives of all stakeholders."

"We commit to shaping workplace safety policies through the collective input of all stakeholders."

Applied OSH professional conduct guideline might include,

"In our practice, we will seek and honor the consent of employees in all matters related to their safety and health, ensuring that their autonomy and choices are respected in workplace safety decisions."

"Engage in collaborative efforts with all stakeholders to develop fair and effective safety policies and practices."

"Collaboratively develop and enforce workplace safety policies that reflect a shared understanding and agreement among all parties."

"Our actions will be guided by the principle of cooperation, actively engaging and partnering with all stakeholders to enhance workplace safety and health in a collaborative and inclusive manner."

"In our professional duties, we will actively facilitate and participate in collaborative forums, embracing a collective approach to decision-making that values the contributions and consensus of workers, management, and other relevant parties in enhancing workplace safety."

"Our actions will reflect a collaborative approach, valuing diverse contributions in safety-related decision-making."

Situational Ethics (Relativism)

Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things: of the things that are, that they are, of the things that are not, that they are not."

Gilbert Harman: "Moral relativism is the idea that our moral judgments are true or false only relative to some particular standpoint and that no standpoint is uniquely privileged over all others. Different cultures have different moral codes."

Ruth Benedict: "Morality differs in every society and is a convenient term for socially approved habits."

Richard Rorty: "Truth is what your contemporaries let you get away with."

The concept of situational ethics suggests that ethical decisions should be based on the specific circumstances of a situation rather than on fixed moral laws. This theory of relativism holds that ethical statements are true or false based on objective moral facts. In this view, moral values and judgments are not absolute but are relative to the cultural, societal, or individual context. This approach might be less directly applicable, as safety standards often have to be consistent and objective. However, understanding cultural differences in perceptions of risk and safety could be relevant when working in diverse or international contexts.

In relativism, OSH practices might vary significantly between different cultural or organizational contexts. What is considered safe or ethical in one workplace might differ in another. This approach would emphasize understanding and respecting diverse perspectives and practices regarding workplace safety.

The application of situational ethics to Occupational safety and health (OSH) provides a flexible and context-sensitive framework for addressing workplace safety. Situational ethics, which posits that ethical decisions should be based on the specific circumstances of each situation rather than on fixed moral rules, offers several insights for OSH professionals:

Contextual Decision Making: Situational ethics allows OSH professionals to make decisions based on the specific context of a safety issue, recognizing that the best solution may vary depending on the unique circumstances of each workplace or situation.

Flexibility in Safety Protocols: This approach supports the idea that safety protocols might need adaptation to fit different scenarios or environments. OSH professionals can tailor safety measures to be more effective for specific workplace contexts.

Dynamic Risk Assessment: Situational ethics encourages continuous reassessment of risks and hazards based on changing conditions and contexts, promoting a dynamic approach to risk management rather than a one-size-fits-all solution.

Empathy and Understanding: By considering the specific circumstances and perspectives of employees, situational ethics fosters a more empathetic approach, where the concerns and needs of individual workers are taken into account in safety planning.

Balancing Moral Principles with Practicality: Situational ethics in OSH involves balancing broader moral principles, such as worker rights and well-being, with practical considerations unique to each situation, such as operational constraints and resource availability.

Ethical Problem-Solving: This approach equips OSH professionals with the ability to navigate complex ethical dilemmas where standard rules may not offer clear guidance, enabling more nuanced problem-solving.

Enhanced Communication: Emphasizing the importance of the specific situation encourages open dialogue and communication with workers to understand their unique experiences and needs better.

Responsiveness to Change: Situational ethics aligns well with industries and workplaces that are fast-changing or have varying conditions, as it allows OSH professionals to quickly adapt and respond to new safety challenges.

Employee Engagement and Participation: This approach can encourage greater employee participation in safety matters, as it values their input and experiences in shaping safety practices.

Moral Sensitivity: Situational ethics fosters moral sensitivity, helping OSH professionals to recognize and weigh different ethical aspects in diverse situations, leading to more informed and compassionate decision-making.

Incorporating situational ethics into OSH practices offers a way to address the complex and often changing nature of workplace safety, focusing on the nuances and specificities of each situation to ensure effective and ethical safety management.

An OSH ethical code from this relativism perspective might state,

"We acknowledge that ethical approaches to safety and health may vary across different cultural and organizational contexts."

"Respect the diversity of moral perspectives and cultural differences in workplace safety."

"Our ethical decisions are tailored to the unique contexts of each safety situation."

"We acknowledge the diversity of cultural values and norms in our approach to workplace safety, ensuring respect and sensitivity to various cultural perspectives."

"We recognize the importance of context in ethical decision-making, ensuring that our actions in workplace safety are relevant to the context of each situation."

An applied OSH Professional conduct guideline could include,

"Respect and adapt to diverse perspectives and practices in OSH, ensuring that our policies are culturally sensitive and contextually appropriate."

"Adapt safety policies and actions to align with the varying cultural and ethical norms of different workplace environments."

"Our safety practices will be culturally sensitive and inclusive."

"We adapt our practices to meet the specific needs of every workplace scenario."

"Our actions and policies will reflect an understanding and accommodation of cultural differences in the workplace, promoting safety practices that are culturally informed and respectful."

"Our practice will be adaptable, responding to the unique circumstances of each workplace scenario to ensure the most ethical outcomes."

Existentialism

Jean-Paul Sartre: "Man is condemned to be free; because once thrown into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. We are our choices."

Simone de Beauvoir: "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman."

Friedrich Nietzsche: "He who has a why to live can bear almost any how."

Christine Korsgaard: "The value of your humanity lies in your ability to make choices, the value of your agency lies in your choosing what is right."

Søren Kierkegaard: "Life can only be understood backwards; but it must be lived forwards."

Existentialism, a philosophical theory emphasizing individual freedom, choice, and subjective experience. Some existentialist philosophers argue that individuals create values and determine morality through the choices they make, leading to a subjective but personally valid moral framework. Phenomenology focuses on subjective human experiences and the meanings individuals attach to them. Existential humanism emphasizes individual freedom and self-realization.

From an existential perspective, an OSH professional's code might emphasize personal responsibility and the authentic commitment to one's values and beliefs. It could encourage professionals to make choices that align with their personal commitment to safety and integrity.

In this framework, personal responsibility and authenticity are key. Employers and employees would be encouraged to make independent, responsible choices regarding safety and health. This might involve empowering workers to speak up about unsafe conditions and take an active role in safety measures.

The application of existentialist philosophy to Occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals offers a rich and nuanced perspective. Existentialism, with its emphasis on individual freedom, choice, and subjective experience, can significantly influence how OSH professionals approach their roles:

Individual Agency and Responsibility: Existentialism's focus on individual autonomy aligns with empowering workers to take an active role in their own safety. OSH professionals can encourage employees to make informed decisions about their safety, emphasizing personal responsibility and engagement.

Authenticity in Safety Practices: Existentialism values authenticity, which in an OSH context translates to developing and implementing safety practices that are genuinely in the best interest of workers, beyond mere compliance with regulations.

Subjective Experiences of Workers: Recognizing the unique experiences and perspectives of each worker, existentialism in OSH would involve a more personalized approach to safety, taking into account individual needs and concerns.

Meaningful Work Environment: Existentialist philosophy stresses the search for meaning and purpose in life. OSH professionals can contribute to creating a work environment where safety is not just a policy but a meaningful part of the workplace culture.

Dealing with Uncertainty and Risk: Existentialism acknowledges the inherent uncertainties of life. OSH professionals can use this understanding to prepare for and manage unpredictable and risky situations in the workplace, emphasizing adaptability and resilience.

Ethical Decision-Making: Existentialism can guide OSH professionals in ethical decision-making by focusing on the consequences of their choices and actions on human lives, fostering a deeper sense of moral responsibility towards worker safety.

Empowerment through Knowledge: By emphasizing the importance of individual understanding and interpretation, existentialism encourages OSH professionals to educate and empower workers with knowledge about safety, fostering a more involved and aware workforce.

Respect for Worker Autonomy: In line with respecting individual freedom, OSH practices guided by existentialism would respect worker autonomy, balancing it with the need to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.

Crisis and Change Management: Existentialism's exploration of human reaction to crisis and change can be valuable for OSH professionals in managing transitions and crises in the workplace, helping workers adapt to new safety protocols or changes in their environment.

Holistic Approach to Safety: Finally, existentialism encourages a holistic view of the individual, combining physical, mental, and emotional aspects. OSH professionals can adopt this approach to address the comprehensive well-being of workers.

Existentialism provides a philosophical framework that encourages OSH professionals to view workplace safety through the lens of individual human experience, autonomy, and responsibility, leading to a more engaged, informed, and adaptive approach to occupational safety and health.

An OSH ethical code from this perspective might state,

"We value and respect the individual freedom and responsibility of each employee in contributing to a safe and healthy workplace."

"Embrace individual autonomy and responsibility in creating and upholding safe working environments."

"We acknowledge the individual worker's unique perspective on workplace health and safety."

An applied OSH professional conduct guideline could include,

"Encourage personal initiative and accountability in safety practices, empowering employees to voice concerns and contribute to safety improvements."

"Support and encourage independent and responsible decision-making in all aspects of workplace safety."

"In our practice, we will respect and support the individual agency and choice of every employee in matters of their occupational safety and health."

Nihilism

Friedrich Nietzsche: "There are no facts, only interpretations."

Jean-Paul Sartre: "Everything has been figured out, except how to live."

Jean-Paul Sartre: "Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness, and dies by chance."

Albert Camus: "The literal meaning of life is whatever you're doing that prevents you from killing yourself."

Arthur Schopenhauer: "Life is a business that does not cover the costs."

Emil Cioran: "Chaos is rejecting all you have learned; chaos is being yourself."

In nihilism, the position is that moral judgments are baseless and that there are no objective moral values asserting that moral facts do not exist. This view challenges the very existence of ethics, values, or morality as meaningful concepts.

A nihilistic perspective might question the inherent value or meaning of OSH standards and practices. In practical terms, this position is less likely to be directly applicable in developing effective OSH management systems.

Applying nihilism, particularly its tenets of skepticism and denial of inherent meaning, to the context of Occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals presents a unique challenge. Nihilism, in its purest form, questions the existence of objective moral truths or values, which can seem at odds with the fundamentally value-driven field of OSH. However, there are aspects of nihilistic philosophy that can be relevant:

Pragmatic Focus: Nihilism's skepticism of absolute truths can lead OSH professionals to adopt a more pragmatic approach, focusing on tangible, observable outcomes in workplace safety rather than abstract moral imperatives. This perspective values actions based on their practical effectiveness rather than their alignment with traditional moral or ethical frameworks.

Questioning Absolute Standards: Nihilism encourages questioning and challenging established norms and beliefs. In OSH, this can translate into a critical examination of existing safety standards and practices, potentially fostering innovation and improvement in safety protocols.

Individual Perspective: Nihilism's focus on individual perspective can encourage OSH professionals to consider the unique viewpoints and experiences of each worker regarding safety and health. This can lead to more personalized and effective safety measures.

Adaptability in Ethical Decision Making: The absence of absolute moral guidelines in nihilism can make OSH professionals more adaptable and open to diverse ethical considerations, especially in complex situations where traditional ethical models provide no clear guidance.

Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty: Nihilism acknowledges the inherent uncertainty and lack of inherent meaning in life's events. OSH professionals can apply this perspective to remain resilient and pragmatic in the face of unpredictable workplace hazards and risks.

Ethical Pluralism: While nihilism itself denies objective ethical truths, its critical stance can lead to an appreciation of ethical pluralism in the workplace, recognizing and respecting a variety of moral perspectives and cultural backgrounds among the workforce.

Emphasis on Evidence and Data: Nihilism's skepticism of inherent values can lead OSH professionals to rely heavily on empirical evidence and data-driven approaches in assessing and implementing safety measures.

In practice, while the core principles of nihilism might seem incompatible with the values-based field of OSH, certain aspects of nihilistic thought can provide a unique lens through which to view and address occupational safety and health challenges, especially in fostering a critical, pragmatic, and adaptive approach to safety management.

In OSH Professional Ethics: An OSH ethical code from this perspective might state,

"While recognizing the diverse interpretations of safety and health values, we commit to pragmatic approaches that effectively address workplace risks."

"Acknowledge the subjective interpretation of safety values, focusing on pragmatic and effective risk management."

"Recognizing the diverse interpretations of meaning and value in safety, we commit to pragmatic and effective risk management."

In OSH Professional Conduct: A conduct statement could include,

"Focus on practical outcomes in safety and health management, prioritizing actions based on their observable impact on reducing workplace hazards."

"Prioritize evidence-based approaches in OSH, emphasizing practical and observable outcomes over moral or ethical imperatives."

"Our actions are grounded in practical outcomes, focusing on observable and objective improvements in workplace safety."

OSH Professional Codes of Ethics and Conduct

Codes of Ethics and Conduct

Occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals have both codes of conduct and codes of ethics, each serving distinct purposes in guiding their professional behavior and decision-making.

Professional Codes of Conduct:

These are specific guidelines or rules set by an organization or professional body. They describe the standards of behavior expected from professionals in their daily work and interactions with others.

Application: Codes of conduct often include concrete, situation-specific directives. For instance, they might dictate how to handle confidential information, manage conflicts of interest, or interact with clients and colleagues.

Example: An OSH professional's code of conduct might include rules like "Report any workplace hazards immediately," or "Do not disclose confidential health information of employees except as required by law."

Rules-Based: A code of conduct typically consists of specific rules and guidelines that dictate acceptable and unacceptable behavior within the profession.

Focus on Actions and Behavior: It concentrates on the actions that professionals should or should not take in their workplace. This can include guidelines on workplace safety practices, reporting procedures, compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, and general professional behavior.

Enforcement and Compliance: Violations of the code of conduct can lead to disciplinary actions. These codes are enforced by professional bodies and organizations, ensuring that members adhere to agreed standards of practice.

Professional Codes of Ethics:

These are more about the principles and values that guide professional behavior. They tend to be broader and more abstract, focusing on ideals like integrity, respect, and responsibility.

Application: Codes of ethics provide a framework for decision-making and behavior. They might not dictate specific actions but instead offer guidelines to help professionals navigate ethical dilemmas.

Example: An OSH professional's code of ethics might include principles like "Always prioritize the health and safety of workers," or "Maintain integrity by avoiding conflicts of interest."

Principles-Based: A code of ethics, on the other hand, is more about the underlying principles and values that guide professionals in their decision-making process. It is less about specific rules and more about ethical considerations.

Focus on Judgment and Morality: It addresses broader ethical issues such as integrity, confidentiality, professional responsibility, and respect for individuals. The emphasis is on moral and ethical aspects of decision-making.

Guidance and Reflection: While a breach of ethical code may also lead to disciplinary actions, the primary purpose of a code of ethics is to provide a framework for ethical judgment and to encourage professionals to reflect on the ethical implications of their decisions.

In practice, both codes of conduct and codes of ethics are essential for guiding OSH professionals. The code of conduct provides concrete rules to follow, ensuring compliance with legal and organizational standards. The code of ethics, on the other hand, helps professionals make sound decisions in complex situations where the right course of action may not be immediately clear.

For example, consider a situation where an OSH professional discovers a safety hazard that is expensive to fix. The code of conduct might dictate that they report this hazard immediately. However, the decision about how to advocate for the necessary changes, considering the company's financial constraints and potential pushback, would be guided by the ethical principles of protecting worker safety while also considering the broader context and impact on the company.

A professional code of conduct provides specific guidelines on behavior and actions, while a code of ethics offers a broader framework centered around ethical principles and values. Both are essential in ensuring that occupational health and safety professionals carry out their duties responsibly and ethically.

Annotated Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct

1. American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine. (2023). ACOEM code of ethics. <https://acoem.org>

This document outlines the ethical standards and professional responsibilities for physicians and other health professionals in occupational and environmental medicine. The ACOEM Code of Ethics emphasizes foundational bioethical principles such as beneficence, nonmaleficence, autonomy, and justice. It provides guidance on issues including patient confidentiality, informed consent, dual obligations to employers and workers, and managing conflicts of interest. Its practical applications are framed within both clinical and workplace settings, making it especially relevant for practitioners who must balance employee health with organizational expectations. The code is significant for its clear articulation of duties unique to occupational medicine and for providing a medical ethics perspective that complements broader professional safety standards. This source was foundational in identifying the themes of health primacy, informed judgment, confidentiality, and public interest in the cross-disciplinary ethical analysis.

2. American Industrial Hygiene Association. (2024). AIHA code of ethics. <https://www.aiha.org>

The AIHA Code of Ethics defines the professional and ethical responsibilities of industrial hygienists and occupational health professionals. It focuses on core values such as honesty, integrity, objectivity, and the protection of health and welfare. The code delineates obligations to clients, employers, the public, and the profession, emphasizing confidentiality, technical competence, and avoiding deceptive practices. A notable feature is its emphasis on upholding scientific standards and the responsible use of professional credentials. In the broader comparative ethics framework, the AIHA code was instrumental in reinforcing themes related to competence, integrity, and public welfare. It supports the ethical posture that technical expertise must be matched by moral accountability and was useful for distinguishing between permissible advocacy and impermissible misrepresentation in safety science.

3. American Society of Civil Engineers. (2020). Code of ethics. <https://www.asce.org>

The ASCE Code of Ethics sets forth principles to guide civil engineers in the practice of their profession, focusing on public health, safety, welfare, and sustainable development. The 2020 update marked a significant shift by adopting a hierarchical structure based on seven fundamental principles: creating safe and sustainable infrastructure, enhancing quality of life, and acting with honesty and fairness. The code places strong emphasis on the engineer's duty to serve the public interest, promote equity and inclusion, and uphold environmental responsibility. Its robust commitment to accountability and ethical leadership

across organizational levels makes it a model of professional conduct in engineering. Within the cross-code thematic analysis, ASCE's code directly informed the development of themes such as public interest and environmental responsibility, respect and fairness, and legal compliance.

4. American Society of Safety Professionals. (2024). ASSP code of professional conduct. <https://www.assp.org>

The ASSP Code of Professional Conduct outlines ethical and professional expectations for safety professionals across industries. It emphasizes the responsibility to protect people, property, and the environment while upholding honesty, competence, and fairness. The code calls on members to avoid conflicts of interest, maintain confidentiality, provide truthful communications, and continuously develop their professional knowledge. It reinforces the importance of compliance with applicable laws and regulations and promotes transparency in decision-making. The ASSP code was a central reference in formulating the themes of integrity, competence, legal compliance, and accountability. Its practical orientation and alignment with systems safety and risk management make it particularly useful for applied ethical analysis in occupational safety and health (OSH) contexts.

5. Australian Institute of Health & Safety. (2020). AIHS code of ethics. <https://www.aihs.org.au>

The AIHS Code of Ethics offers a values-based framework guiding the conduct of health and safety professionals in Australia. It emphasizes integrity, respect, accountability, and professional competence while explicitly addressing human dignity and sustainability. The code goes beyond compliance by encouraging ethical reflection and dialogue in complex work environments. Its structure includes guiding principles, expected behaviors, and commentary that aid interpretation. The AIHS code significantly contributed to the thematic development of respect, fairness, competence, and ethical decision-making. Its inclusion of environmental responsibility and human rights further deepened the framework's coverage of public interest themes. The document's emphasis on reflective and responsible practice offers a progressive model for ethical engagement in safety science.

6. Board for Global EHS Credentialing. (2020). BGC code of ethics. <https://gobgc.org>

The BGC Code of Ethics sets forth the ethical and professional expectations for credential holders in environmental, health, and safety (EHS) disciplines. It underscores responsibilities such as maintaining scientific integrity, avoiding conflicts of interest, and communicating accurately and honestly. Practitioners are also expected to remain within the limits of their professional competence and comply with all applicable legal requirements. The code is notable for its emphasis on public trust and environmental stewardship. It made a strong

contribution to the themes of integrity, competence, legal compliance, and conflict of interest in the thematic framework. By articulating a commitment to high ethical standards in global EHS practice, the BGC code reinforces the credibility and responsibility of credentialed professionals in diverse settings.

7. Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals. (2022). Code of ethics and professional conduct. <https://www.bcrsp.ca>

The BCRSP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct outlines standards for certified Canadian safety professionals, focusing on protection of public welfare, honesty, and professional competence. It sets expectations for accurate communication, legal compliance, avoidance of conflicts of interest, and the maintenance of confidentiality. The code also addresses the importance of respect in professional relationships and dedication to lifelong learning. It significantly informed the development of the ten ethical themes, particularly in areas of accountability, competence, and the primacy of safety and health. The BCRSP's detailed guidance reflects both a regulatory and aspirational tone, offering a well-rounded model for ethical safety practice in national and international contexts.

8. Board of Certified Safety Professionals. (2023). BCSP code of ethics. <https://www.bcsp.org>

The BCSP Code of Ethics defines the conduct expected of safety professionals certified by the Board. Its principles include protecting people, property, and the environment; acting with honesty and fairness; respecting privacy and confidentiality; and avoiding actions that discredit the profession. It also requires adherence to legal and professional standards, continuous professional development, and clear disclosure of conflicts of interest. This code was instrumental in shaping multiple ethical themes, particularly integrity, confidentiality, competence, and conflict of interest. The BCSP's clear, rule-based structure is effective for regulatory enforcement while also supporting ethical reflection, making it a practical and influential standard within the safety profession.

9. Institute of Hazardous Materials Management. (2025). IHMM code of ethics. <https://ihmm.org/ihmm-code-of-ethics/>

The IHMM Code of Ethics outlines ethical obligations for professionals in hazardous materials management and related fields. It emphasizes honesty, objectivity, confidentiality, and adherence to legal and technical standards. Professionals are expected to perform only within their competence, avoid deceptive acts, and prioritize public welfare. The code also highlights the duty to report violations and maintain the integrity of the profession. IHMM's ethical directives contributed directly to themes such as legal compliance, integrity, competence, and accountability. Its inclusion of public safety and reporting

expectations also reinforced the significance of ethical transparency and trust in hazardous materials and environmental contexts.

10. Institution of Occupational Safety and Health. (2013). IOSH code of conduct. <https://www.iosh.com>

The IOSH Code of Conduct provides a framework for the professional behavior of occupational safety and health practitioners in the UK and globally. It focuses on principles such as integrity, professional competence, respect for others, and accountability. The code emphasizes members' responsibility to protect people, act impartially, maintain confidentiality, and avoid actions that could bring disrepute to the profession. It also outlines specific expectations around conflicts of interest, legal compliance, and professional development. This code played a pivotal role in confirming the ten ethical themes, especially those addressing integrity, fairness, conflict of interest, and respect. IOSH's structured format and global reach reinforce its authority as a standard-bearer for safety ethics.

11. International Commission on Occupational Health. (2012). International code of ethics for occupational health professionals (3rd ed.). <https://www.icohweb.org>

The ICOH Code of Ethics provides a comprehensive ethical framework for occupational health professionals worldwide. Rooted in principles of beneficence, autonomy, and justice, it emphasizes professional independence, the primacy of workers' health, and the importance of informed consent and confidentiality. The code outlines the dual loyalty challenges professionals face when balancing employer interests with worker protection, and it encourages transparency and ethical judgment. The ICOH document significantly influenced the themes of public interest, confidentiality, ethical decision-making, and health and safety priority. Its integration of ethical theory with practical workplace application makes it a cornerstone for understanding global occupational health ethics.

12. International Labour Organization. (2020). Ethical principles in occupational health. <https://www.ilo.org>

The ILO's Ethical Principles in Occupational Health present a globally recognized ethical foundation aimed at improving worker protection and workplace health systems. The principles emphasize dignity, equity, impartiality, and the prioritization of worker well-being. Core directives include maintaining confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, promoting transparency, and avoiding conflicts of interest. The ILO stresses that occupational health professionals must be guided by the interests of the worker and public health, even under pressure from employers or clients. These principles were instrumental in reinforcing themes related to public interest, fairness, legal compliance, and professional autonomy. The ILO's influence lies in its moral clarity and international scope, setting a benchmark for ethical consistency across national borders.

13. National Society of Professional Engineers. (2019). NSPE code of ethics for engineers. <https://www.nspe.org/resources/ethics/code-ethics>
The NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers establishes guiding principles for the professional conduct of engineers, emphasizing public health, safety, and welfare as paramount responsibilities. It includes mandates for integrity, honesty, competence, and accountability, and urges engineers to avoid deceptive acts, report unethical practices, and act within their areas of expertise. The code also addresses confidentiality, sustainable development, and professional development. This comprehensive ethical framework made significant contributions to themes such as public interest, competence, legal compliance, and environmental responsibility. Its well-defined structure and long-standing authority make it a foundational reference in ethical engineering practice.
14. National Society of Professional Engineers. (2024). NSPE code of conduct (BoD Approved 2024-04-13). <https://www.nspe.org>

Core Ethical Themes in Occupational Safety and Health Practice

To establish a comprehensive and universally resonant ethical framework for occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals, this work conducted a detailed comparative analysis of fifteen authoritative codes of ethics and conduct from leading professional bodies across safety, engineering, health, and environmental disciplines. These sources—ranging from the American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP, 2024), the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020), to the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE, 2019; 2024)—provided the foundational content for identifying recurring ethical priorities and responsibilities across domains.

The process began with a thematic coding of each document, extracting explicit ethical directives, responsibilities, and behavioral expectations. Statements were examined for language that expressed normative standards (e.g., “shall,” “must,” “are expected to”) and were then grouped by conceptual affinity. For example, commitments to truthfulness, accuracy, and honesty consistently appeared across all codes, forming the core of the “Integrity and Honesty” theme. Similarly, directives around safeguarding human life and public welfare, especially in technical and environmental contexts, strongly aligned under the theme of “Primacy of Health, Safety, and Welfare.”

The coding also incorporated the structural cues embedded within each document. Codes such as the BCSP (2023) and BCRSP (2022) provided categorical sections that explicitly differentiated between professional competence, public duty, and client relationships. Others, such as the AIHA (2024) and ACOEM (2023), framed ethical expectations within broader philosophical principles like beneficence and justice. Synthesizing these frameworks required reconciling both aspirational and compliance-oriented formulations.

These themes are not abstract generalizations but are instead grounded in specific language from each code. For instance, the NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers (2019) states that engineers must “hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public,” directly supporting Theme 3. The AIHS Code (2020) emphasizes “truth, honesty and fairness,” reinforcing Themes 1 and 5. Similarly, the BGC (2020) and IHMM (2025) codes provide clear mandates around competence and legal compliance, reflected in Themes 2 and 6.

By anchoring the ten themes in real-world professional codes, this framework achieves both breadth and specificity. It enables ethical alignment across disciplinary boundaries while remaining applicable to the unique dilemmas encountered in safety, health, and environmental practice.

Occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals hold a profound ethical responsibility: to protect the lives, health, and dignity of workers while advancing the public interest through safe and sustainable work environments. The ethical framework guiding this responsibility is informed by both enduring moral theories and the practical

realities of professional safety practice. While these principles often echo broader professional ethics, they are uniquely attuned to the moral demands of protecting human life in environments shaped by technical complexity, organizational pressure, and social diversity.

A thematic analysis of international codes of ethics, including those from BCSP, ASSP, BCRSP, AIHS, and INSHPO, reveals ten core ethical themes, each deeply rooted in valid moral philosophies and reflective of the evolving scope of safety leadership. Through iterative comparison and inductive analysis, ten core ethical themes were distilled:

1. Integrity and Honesty
2. Competence and Professional Development
3. Health, Safety, and Welfare Priority
4. Confidentiality and Privacy
5. Respect, Equity, and Fairness
6. Legal and Regulatory Compliance
7. Ethical Judgment and Decision-Making
8. Transparency and Accountability
9. Managing Conflicts of Interest
10. Public Interest and Environmental Responsibility

The thematic analysis effectively captures the fundamental principles consistently reflected across international codes of ethics such as those from BCSP, ASSP, BCRSP, AIHS, and others. Each of these ten core ethical themes aligns closely with widely recognized approaches to moral philosophies, including virtue ethics, deontology, consequentialism, and care ethics. They also accurately reflect the evolving expectations of safety leadership in response to contemporary workplace challenges, societal demands, and ethical standards. These themes provide a clear, comprehensive, and well-supported framework for professional ethical behavior in occupational safety and health.

These ten themes are not isolated mandates but deeply interconnected. For instance, ethical decision-making is strengthened by competence and transparency; fairness is underpinned by respect and avoidance of bias; and public interest is best served when professionals act with integrity and foresight.

In a rapidly changing world, OSH professionals must also navigate emerging ethical challenges from AI-driven safety systems to mental health and psychosocial risks, remote work dynamics, and climate-related hazards. Addressing these issues requires adaptive, pluralistic, and future-facing ethical reasoning.

Ultimately, OSH professionals are more than compliance officers, they are moral agents, change leaders, and stewards of safety culture. By grounding their practice in these ethical themes, they uphold the values of trust, protection, and human dignity that define the very essence of the safety profession.

Each scenario and its options demonstrate the complexity of ethical decision-making. Consistently, the ethically ideal options balance integrity, transparency, responsibility, and stakeholder welfare, while pragmatic options often reflect a realistic attempt to manage conflicting interests and practical constraints. Ethical decision-making ideally prioritizes integrity, safety, respect, fairness, transparency, and public interest above personal convenience or organizational pressure.

1. Integrity and Honesty

At the foundation of ethical safety practice is the expectation that OSH professionals act with integrity and truthfulness. This includes accurately representing qualifications, faithfully reporting safety findings, and resisting pressures to manipulate data or outcomes. This theme reflects virtue ethics, where moral character shapes professional credibility.

Case Study: “The Inflated Audit Report”

Jordan is a certified occupational safety and health (OSH) professional working for a mid-sized manufacturing company. As part of a routine internal safety audit, Jordan identifies several serious deficiencies in machine guarding, emergency egress, and chemical labeling. These issues pose clear risks and are out of compliance with OSHA standards.

Jordan prepares a detailed report documenting these issues, but just before submission, the plant manager reviews the draft and asks Jordan to “soften the language” and remove the section detailing the chemical labeling violations. The manager argues that the company is bidding for a major contract and fears the audit could be leaked or requested by a potential client.

Jordan now faces an ethical dilemma: whether to comply with the manager’s request, alter the report, or escalate the issue.

Option 1: Submit the Full, Accurate Report Without Changes

- Pros:
 - Upholds integrity, honesty, and professional ethics.
 - Accurately reflects risks, ensuring appropriate corrective action.
 - Protects workers from harm and aligns with regulatory duty.
 - Reinforces the role of the safety professional as a credible advisor.
- Cons:
 - Risks damaging trust with plant management.
 - May provoke internal backlash or career stagnation.
 - Could negatively impact the company’s bid if disclosed externally.

Option 2: Revise the Report to Minimize Language, but Retain the Issues

- Pros:
 - May preserve working relationship with management.
 - Retains some integrity by documenting all issues.

- Might prevent the most serious backlash while signaling areas for improvement.
- Cons:
 - Still compromises transparency.
 - Downplays the severity of safety hazards.
 - Weakens the ethical standard and professional credibility.

Option 3: Remove the Chemical Labeling Section as Requested

- Pros:
 - Avoids conflict with management and aligns with business objectives.
 - Protects the company's short-term reputation during contract bidding.
- Cons:
 - Violates ethical duty and professional codes of conduct.
 - Puts workers at risk due to incomplete reporting.
 - Risks long-term liability if an incident occurs or issues are discovered.
 - Could lead to regulatory penalties or legal consequences.

Option 4: Seek Advice or Escalate the Concern to a Higher Authority (e.g., Corporate Ethics Officer or Legal Counsel)

- Pros:
 - Creates a record of due diligence and ethical consultation.
 - Provides organizational clarity and support for ethical action.
 - Shares responsibility and may lead to systemic resolution.
- Cons:
 - Could be perceived as insubordination or bypassing authority.
 - Might trigger internal investigation or strain workplace relationships.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 1 most directly aligns with the ethical principle of integrity and honesty, consistent with professional codes from BCSP, ASSP, and other global OSH organizations. While it may create tension, it protects worker safety, regulatory compliance, and professional credibility. Option 4 may also be appropriate if Jordan seeks support or protection before proceeding, especially in a politically sensitive environment.

2. Competence and Professional Development

Grounded in deontological and virtue-based reasoning, competence is not only a technical requirement but a moral imperative. OSH professionals must maintain their knowledge and limit their practice to areas where they are qualified, recognizing that uninformed actions can endanger lives. Continuous learning is viewed as a duty to oneself and to the people one serves.

Case Study: “Out of Depth”

Taylor, a recently certified OSH professional, has been working in a large logistics company for six months. One day, Taylor is asked by senior management to conduct a comprehensive risk assessment of a newly acquired chemical storage facility. The

facility handles a wide range of hazardous materials, including volatile organics and corrosives.

Taylor has a solid foundation in general safety management but has no formal training or experience in chemical safety or industrial hygiene. Despite this, management insists on a quick turnaround and assures Taylor that “a good generalist should be able to figure it out.”

Taylor is aware that mishandling this assessment could lead to inaccurate risk controls or overlooked hazards with serious health consequences. Taylor must now decide how to proceed.

Option 1: Accept the Assignment and Proceed with the Assessment

- Pros:
 - Meets management’s expectations for responsiveness.
 - Demonstrates initiative and willingness to take on challenging tasks.
 - May learn on the job if risks are low and resources are accessible.
- Cons:
 - Violates the ethical standard of practicing only within one’s competence.
 - Risks overlooking critical chemical hazards due to inexperience.
 - Compromises professional credibility and exposes the company to liability.

Option 2: Disclose Limitations and Request Support from a Chemical Safety Expert

- Pros:
 - Upholds ethical duty to recognize and operate within one’s scope of expertise.
 - Promotes a collaborative, learning-based solution.
 - Enhances safety by involving qualified professionals.
- Cons:
 - May disappoint management or be perceived as a lack of confidence.
 - Could delay the assessment, especially if expert resources are limited.
 - Requires courage to assert professional boundaries early in one’s career.

Option 3: Decline the Assignment Entirely

- Pros:
 - Strongly reinforces the principle of competence.
 - Avoids any risk of unethical or unsafe assessment work.
 - May prompt management to reevaluate resource planning.
- Cons:
 - Could be perceived as inflexible or uncooperative.
 - Risks alienating leadership or missing out on professional development.
 - May not resolve the immediate need if no alternative plan is proposed.

Option 4: Attempt the Assessment with Minimal Consultation and Generic Guidance

- Pros:
 - Provides management with a timely deliverable.
 - Avoids immediate confrontation or delay.
 - Uses available knowledge and templates to produce basic recommendations.
- Cons:
 - Likely insufficient for handling specific chemical hazards.
 - Represents a dangerous compromise between appearance and expertise.
 - May lead to ineffective controls or liability if hazards are misjudged.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 2 best aligns with the ethical theme of Competence and Professional Development, as it demonstrates self-awareness, protects safety outcomes, and supports continued learning. Taylor's responsibility is not to appear all-knowing, but to act within professional bounds and seek help when expertise is lacking. Option 1 and 4 may satisfy short-term expectations but compromise safety and ethics. Option 3 could be too rigid without offering a constructive path forward.

3. Health, Safety, and Welfare Priority

The prioritization of health and safety is the ethical cornerstone of the profession. Rooted in consequentialist ethics, this principle mandates that decisions aim to prevent harm and promote well-being, even when such choices may challenge organizational convenience or profit motives.

Case Study: “The Production Push”

Morgan, an experienced OSH professional at a large food processing plant, is notified that one of the high-speed packaging lines is operating without its interlock guard—a safeguard designed to shut the machine down when opened. This modification was made by the maintenance team to meet a tight production deadline, and plant management is aware but has not intervened.

Morgan reports the issue and recommends an immediate shutdown of the line until the guard can be properly reinstalled. However, the operations director argues that halting production for even a few hours would result in thousands of dollars in losses and could jeopardize a national contract.

Morgan now faces the challenge of balancing production pressures with the ethical and professional obligation to protect workers from a serious machine hazard.

Option 1: Insist on an Immediate Shutdown of the Line

- Pros:
 - Upholds the ethical principle of prioritizing worker safety above all else.
 - Reduces risk of severe injury or fatality.
 - Reinforces professional credibility and organizational accountability.
- Cons:
 - Could result in conflict with operations leadership.

- May cause significant production and financial disruption.
- Risks short-term reputational strain with internal stakeholders.

Option 2: Recommend Temporary Alternative Controls Without Halting Production

- Pros:
 - Maintains operational continuity while seeking safer conditions.
 - Appears cooperative and solution-oriented.
 - Buys time to address safety issue without immediate shutdown.
- Cons:
 - May not meet legal or ethical safety standards.
 - Could be interpreted as endorsing a known hazard.
 - Still exposes workers to serious risk of harm.

Option 3: Escalate the Issue to a Higher Authority or Regulatory Body

- Pros:
 - Ensures the hazard is addressed through external oversight if necessary.
 - Protects worker safety and meets duty to report imminent dangers.
 - Signals zero tolerance for unsafe practices.
- Cons:
 - May bypass organizational chain of command.
 - Risks organizational backlash or political fallout.
 - Could result in legal penalties or damaged business relationships.

Option 4: Document Concern Internally but Take No Immediate Action

- Pros:
 - Maintains internal records of the issue.
 - Avoids direct confrontation with operations leadership.
 - Preserves short-term organizational harmony.
- Cons:
 - Ethically and legally negligent.
 - Fails to protect workers from foreseeable harm.
 - Could result in injury, fatality, or reputational damage if the hazard materializes.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 1 best reflects the ethical standard of Primacy of Health and Safety—a core obligation of OSH professionals. The duty to protect workers must override production goals, especially when an active hazard violates basic safety protections. Option 3 may be warranted if internal resistance persists, while Options 2 and 4 risk compromising moral and legal responsibilities.

4. Confidentiality and Privacy

Derived from rights-based ethics, OSH professionals are expected to protect sensitive information, share it only with appropriate authorization, and uphold the dignity and

autonomy of all individuals involved. Trust in the safety function depends on this discretion.

Case Study: “The Private Diagnosis”

Alex, an OSH professional at a municipal utilities department, is conducting a return-to-work assessment for Jordan, a line worker recently treated for a medical condition. During the assessment, the HR department confidentially shares with Alex that Jordan has been diagnosed with a chronic neurological disorder that may intermittently affect motor coordination.

Later that week, Alex overhears a supervisor questioning whether Jordan is "fit to be back" and asking Alex privately, "What's really going on with him?" The supervisor suggests they may need to reassign Jordan if he is a risk on the job. Alex is concerned about safety but also knows that revealing medical details without consent breaches confidentiality.

Option 1: Disclose the Full Medical Information to the Supervisor

- Pros:
 - Provides the supervisor with complete context to make an informed assignment decision.
 - May reduce risk if the condition creates safety concerns in a physically demanding role.
- Cons:
 - Violates privacy rights and confidentiality agreements.
 - Damages trust between the worker and the safety function.
 - Could expose the organization to discrimination claims or legal liability.

Option 2: Decline to Share Specifics, Refer Supervisor to HR or Jordan

- Pros:
 - Upholds confidentiality and privacy standards.
 - Encourages direct communication between supervisor and appropriate parties.
 - Maintains trust in the OSH professional's role as a neutral, ethical intermediary.
- Cons:
 - May frustrate the supervisor who feels unprepared to manage potential risks.
 - Delays resolution if communication breaks down or HR is unresponsive.

Option 3: Provide a Risk-Based Functional Assessment Without Disclosing Diagnosis

- Pros:
 - Balances safety concerns and privacy by discussing only job-relevant capabilities.
 - Supports informed decision-making without revealing sensitive details.
 - Reinforces role boundaries and promotes ethical, competency-based

assessment.

- Cons:
 - May not fully address the supervisor's underlying concerns.
 - Still relies on subjective judgment if the diagnosis affects unpredictable aspects of performance.

Option 4: Document the Concern but Take No Further Action

- Pros:
 - Preserves privacy and records the incident defensively.
 - Avoids conflict or escalation in the short term.
- Cons:
 - Misses opportunity to guide a constructive resolution.
 - May allow workplace gossip, assumptions, or stigma to take hold.
 - Fails to support inclusive and safe reintegration.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 3 is most aligned with the ethical principle of Confidentiality and Privacy, as well as professional integrity. It enables Alex to fulfill the safety function without breaching medical privacy, focusing instead on task-specific capabilities. Option 2 may be used in combination, ensuring the supervisor is routed to proper channels without ethical compromise. Option 1 is clearly unethical, and Option 4 reflects avoidance rather than ethical engagement.

5. Respect, Equity, and Fairness

This theme emphasizes just treatment, non-discrimination, and inclusion. Informed by justice ethics and feminist ethics, professionals are called to challenge inequities in how risks and resources are distributed, ensuring all workers—regardless of role, background, or identity—are protected and respected.

Case Study: “The Inappropriate Fit”

Sam, an OSH professional at a global construction firm, notices that some female field staff have been provided with personal protective equipment (PPE)—particularly harnesses and gloves—that do not fit properly. These workers have voiced concerns about discomfort and reduced mobility, but the procurement team insists on using a standard size range to reduce costs and streamline inventory.

One worker was recently reprimanded for non-compliance after modifying her gear for comfort. She later confided to Sam that the modifications were necessary to do her job safely. Sam raises the issue during a safety committee meeting, but leadership suggests this is an isolated complaint and not worth escalating.

Sam now faces a decision: whether to advocate more forcefully for inclusive PPE or defer to management's stance.

Option 1: Advocate Firmly for Inclusive, Properly Fitted PPE

- Pros:

- Upholds respect, equity, and the right to safe, functional gear.
- Supports an inclusive safety culture that values all workers equally.
- May reduce injury risk and increase trust in the safety function.
- Cons:
 - Could create friction with procurement or leadership.
 - May require budgetary changes and supply chain adjustments.
 - Risks being viewed as disruptive or overly focused on niche concerns.

Option 2: Support Individual Workers Quietly by Allowing Modifications

- Pros:
 - Offers immediate relief to affected workers.
 - Avoids public conflict while still promoting safety.
- Cons:
 - Encourages unofficial workarounds that may violate policy or increase liability.
 - Does not address systemic inequity or broader workforce needs.
 - Undermines consistent enforcement of safety standards.

Option 3: Document Concerns but Defer to Management's Decision

- Pros:
 - Maintains neutrality and avoids direct conflict with leadership.
 - Creates a formal record of the issue if problems later arise.
- Cons:
 - Fails to address ongoing inequity and discomfort.
 - Risks perpetuating gender bias and undermines psychological safety.
 - Diminishes the professional's perceived commitment to fairness.

Option 4: Propose a Pilot Program to Evaluate Inclusive PPE Options

- Pros:
 - Offers a constructive, evidence-based path forward.
 - Engages stakeholders in solution-building without direct confrontation.
 - Supports gradual adoption based on results and user feedback.
- Cons:
 - May be slow to implement while needs remain unmet.
 - Could be viewed as bureaucratic or unnecessary if not supported by leadership.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 1 aligns most strongly with the ethical principle of Respect, Equity, and Fairness, as well as safety inclusion and dignity in the workplace. It affirms that safety must be accessible and functional for all workers, not just those who fit standard assumptions. Option 4 provides a diplomatic but principled compromise, while Option 2 and 3 fail to resolve the systemic issue and may enable inequity.

6. Legal and Regulatory Compliance

While following the law is a baseline ethical requirement, it also reflects deontological duty: the moral obligation to comply with standards that safeguard lives. OSH professionals are expected to know and uphold relevant laws, but also to act beyond mere compliance when higher ethical considerations arise.

Case Study: “Out of Pocket Protection”

Jamie, an OSH professional at a warehouse distribution center, discovers during a routine walk-through that several workers are wearing upgraded personal protective equipment (PPE), including high-quality boots and respiratory masks not issued by the company. When asked, employees explain that the company-issued PPE is uncomfortable, doesn’t fit properly, or fails to protect them adequately for their tasks—particularly when handling dusty or corrosive materials.

Further investigation reveals that a supervisor had encouraged workers to “just buy what works” and that employees are paying for this out of pocket. While the improved gear appears to enhance safety, Jamie is aware that under occupational safety regulations, employers are responsible for providing and maintaining necessary PPE at no cost to the employee.

Jamie must decide how to address this practice, knowing that workers are taking initiative to stay safe, but the company may be violating both ethical and legal responsibilities.

Option 1: Stop the Practice and Require Only Company-Issued PPE

- Pros:
 - Reinforces compliance with employer responsibility laws.
 - Centralizes PPE quality control and accountability.
 - Avoids shifting financial burden onto employees.
- Cons:
 - May reduce the quality of protection if company-issued PPE is inferior.
 - Could lower worker morale and trust in management.
 - Doesn’t address the root cause—insufficient or poorly fitted PPE.

Option 2: Allow Employee-Purchased PPE with Approval and Reimbursement

- Pros:
 - Enhances protection while maintaining oversight and legal responsibility.
 - Balances compliance with worker autonomy and comfort.
 - Supports morale by validating workers’ concerns and investments.
- Cons:
 - May require new policies and administrative effort to manage reimbursements.
 - Risks inconsistency in PPE standards if not well-regulated.
 - Could be viewed as an informal workaround rather than a policy fix.

Option 3: Propose Immediate Review and Upgrade of Company-Issued PPE

- Pros:

- Systematically addresses the root issue through policy reform.
- Ensures that all workers receive fit-for-purpose PPE.
- Reinforces employer accountability and compliance with law.
- Cons:
 - Requires time and budget allocation for new procurement.
 - May delay resolution for current worker discomfort or exposure.

Option 4: Ignore the Practice as Long as PPE Appears Effective

- Pros:
 - Avoids conflict and maintains worker initiative.
 - Reduces immediate administrative or procurement pressure.
- Cons:
 - Violates legal standards requiring employer-provided PPE.
 - Risks unequal treatment and financial inequity among workers.
 - Exposes the company to liability and regulatory sanctions.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 3 best reflects the OSH professional's duty to uphold Legal and Regulatory Compliance while supporting worker safety and fairness. Option 2 can serve as a transitional solution if paired with proper oversight and reimbursement. Option 1 may seem compliant but risks worker dissatisfaction and reduced protection. Option 4 is ethically and legally indefensible.

7. Ethical Judgment and Decision-Making

When rules conflict or consequences are uncertain, OSH professionals must use sound ethical reasoning. Drawing from reflective equilibrium and pluralist ethics, decision-making should integrate duties, outcomes, and virtues, considering multiple perspectives and stakeholder impacts.

Case Study: "The Broken Ladder Call"

Pat is an OSH professional at a large warehouse facility. During an inspection, a team lead reports that a fixed access ladder to the mezzanine level has a cracked support bracket. The ladder has been flagged in a previous audit, but no repair has been completed due to budget reallocation to other facility upgrades. The only alternative is a mobile scaffold that would significantly slow down operations.

Later that day, a supervisor informs Pat that two shifts are scheduled to use the ladder for inventory tasks and asks if it's "safe enough for now." The ladder is still functional but clearly degraded. Pat knows that prohibiting use will disrupt operations and create logistical headaches. Yet authorizing use may compromise safety.

Pat is not just evaluating the physical hazard but weighing the ethical implications of either accepting short-term risk or enforcing a decision that impacts productivity and team dynamics.

Option 1: Prohibit Use of the Ladder Until It Is Repaired

- Pros:
 - Prioritizes safety and upholds professional ethical standards.
 - Reduces liability if an incident were to occur.
 - Reinforces a zero-compromise approach to known hazards.
- Cons:
 - Interrupts workflow and may delay critical tasks.
 - May be perceived as overly rigid or lacking understanding of operations.

Option 2: Allow Temporary Use with Added Controls (e.g., Spotter, Limited Access)

- Pros:
 - Offers a practical short-term solution while minimizing immediate risk.
 - Maintains operational flow with visible safety oversight.
 - Shows flexibility in complex decisions.
- Cons:
 - May contradict formal safety policy or regulatory expectations.
 - Introduces subjective judgment into safety decisions.
 - Could be seen as compromising when a clear hazard is known.

Option 3: Document the Hazard and Let Management Decide

- Pros:
 - Transfers decision-making responsibility to those with authority over repairs and operations.
 - Preserves neutrality and avoids direct conflict.
- Cons:
 - Avoids ethical responsibility and leadership expected of OSH professionals.
 - Could result in blame-shifting if an incident occurs.
 - Undermines safety culture and trust in the OSH role.

Option 4: Recommend Immediate Scaffold Use and Accelerate Repair Timeline

- Pros:
 - Proposes a compliant, safety-first solution that avoids risk.
 - Demonstrates problem-solving aligned with ethical and operational needs.
 - Reinforces the OSH role as a constructive leader.
- Cons:
 - May require negotiation and extra coordination.
 - Involves short-term disruption and possible cost allocation shifts.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 4 is most consistent with the principle of Ethical Decision-Making: it balances the safety imperative with operational realities while promoting long-term, systems-based thinking. Option 1 may be ethically sufficient but less adaptable; Option 2 walks a thin line between prudence and compromise. Option 3 fails to exercise the moral agency expected of a safety professional.

8. Transparency and Accountability

Transparency fosters trust, while accountability ensures ethical integrity. These principles are essential in error reporting, decision justification, and performance review. Rooted in both professional ethics and communitarian values, they enable organizational learning and continuous improvement.

Case Study: “The Near Miss That Vanished”

Devon, an OSH professional at a fast-paced manufacturing facility, learns informally that a forklift operator narrowly avoided a collision with a pedestrian worker in a blind corner of the warehouse. No injuries occurred, and the incident wasn’t reported in the formal safety system. When Devon asks the involved team lead why it wasn’t logged, they respond, “It didn’t really happen—no one got hurt. We don’t need paperwork every time something almost happens.”

Later, a senior manager hints that filing too many reports might “draw attention upstairs” and suggests Devon should “focus on actual issues, not close calls.” Devon knows that near-miss reporting is critical for preventing real incidents, but there’s subtle pressure to keep things quiet.

Option 1: File a Full Near-Miss Report and Recommend Preventive Action

- Pros:
 - Upholds transparency and reinforces a proactive safety culture.
 - Enables the organization to identify and address a systemic risk.
 - Demonstrates professional integrity and ethical accountability.
- Cons:
 - May create tension with operations leadership.
 - Risks internal scrutiny or blame for highlighting safety weaknesses.

Option 2: Document the Event Informally Without Submitting a Report

- Pros:
 - Maintains internal awareness without escalating the issue.
 - Preserves relationships with managers and supervisors.
 - Avoids bureaucratic pushback.
- Cons:
 - Circumvents formal processes and weakens reporting culture.
 - Leaves hazard untracked and unaddressed at the system level.
 - Fails to meet professional obligations for accurate documentation.

Option 3: Encourage the Team Lead to Self-Report the Near Miss

- Pros:
 - Promotes ownership of safety culture at the team level.
 - Reinforces accountability without immediately escalating.
 - Builds long-term trust and empowerment.
- Cons:
 - Relies on voluntary compliance, which may not occur.
 - Delays corrective action and might appear evasive.

Option 4: Escalate the Issue to Senior Safety or Compliance Leaders

- Pros:
 - Ensures that the concern is formally acknowledged and investigated.
 - Reinforces the seriousness of near-miss events in leadership circles.
 - Protects the OSH professional from future liability.
- Cons:
 - May create conflict with mid-level management.
 - Could be perceived as bypassing local chain of command.

9. Managing Conflicts of Interest

To preserve impartiality, OSH professionals must proactively identify and manage conflicts of interest. This principle supports professional role morality, which holds that ethical responsibilities to workers and the public must override personal or organizational gain.

Case Study: Divided Loyalties: Preserving Objectivity in Safety Product Evaluation

As a senior Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) professional, you are asked to serve on a committee evaluating a new line of safety equipment intended for deployment across multiple high-risk worksites. The decision will influence procurement, training, and—most importantly—the level of protection afforded to workers. The process is expected to be rigorous, evidence-based, and beyond reproach.

As you review the list of vendors, you recognize one immediately. A close friend (or family member) holds a senior position at one of the competing companies. You know their integrity and competence, but you also understand that your personal relationship—whether it influences you or not—could reasonably be perceived as a source of bias.

No one else on the committee appears aware of this connection. The project timeline is tight, and your technical expertise is valued. Disclosing the relationship could mean being removed from the evaluation or slowing the process while safeguards are put in place. Remaining silent, however, risks compromising not only the objectivity of the evaluation but also the credibility of the decision if the relationship is later revealed.

You are now faced with a classic ethical tension between personal loyalty, professional identity, and public trust. Professional role morality demands that your primary obligation is to worker safety and the public good—not to personal relationships, organizational convenience, or reputational self-protection.

The choice you make will signal more than compliance with a rule; it will demonstrate how seriously you take the ethical foundations of the OSH profession.

Option 1: Fully disclose the relationship and withdraw from the project evaluation

- Pros
 - Eliminates both actual and perceived conflicts of interest
 - Demonstrates the highest level of ethical integrity and transparency
 - Protects the credibility of the evaluation process and the organization
 - Strongly aligns with professional codes of ethics and role morality
- Cons
 - Loss of opportunity to contribute technical expertise
 - May delay the evaluation or burden the team
 - Potential personal or professional discomfort

Option 2: Disclose the relationship and continue participating with formal oversight from an impartial colleague

- Pros
 - Maintains transparency while allowing use of your expertise
 - Reduces risk of bias through peer review or oversight
 - Demonstrates ethical awareness and accountability
 - Often a practical solution in organizations with limited expertise
- Cons
 - Perception of bias may still exist despite safeguards
 - Requires clear documentation and managerial support
 - Oversight mechanisms may not fully eliminate subtle influence

Option 3: Conduct the evaluation without disclosing the personal relationship

- Pros
 - No immediate disruption to the project
 - Avoids personal or professional awkwardness
 - Allows full participation without oversight
- Cons
 - Violates principles of transparency and integrity
 - Undermines trust if the relationship is later discovered
 - Compromises professional objectivity, even if unintentionally
 - Exposes the organization and profession to reputational harm

Option 4: Suggest assigning the evaluation to someone else without explaining the reason

- Pros
 - Removes you from the decision-making process
 - Protects technical objectivity of the evaluation
 - Avoids direct involvement in a conflicted role
- Cons
 - Lacks transparency and ethical disclosure
 - Missed opportunity to model ethical leadership
 - Leaves unresolved questions about motivation
 - Does not strengthen organizational ethical culture

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 1 and Option 2 are most consistent with ethical decision-making in OSH practice, as both uphold transparency, professional integrity, and the primacy of worker and public safety. Option 1 represents the strongest expression of role morality by fully eliminating actual and perceived conflicts of interest, though it may be less adaptable in resource-constrained environments. Option 2 offers a pragmatic and ethically defensible alternative, balancing impartiality with operational realities when safeguards and oversight are formally established. Option 4, while preserving technical objectivity, falls short of ethical best practice due to its lack of transparency and failure to exercise professional moral agency. Option 3 is fundamentally inconsistent with the ethical obligations of a safety professional, as nondisclosure of a known conflict undermines trust, compromises professional credibility, and prioritizes personal convenience over ethical duty.

10. Public Interest and Environmental Responsibility

Extending ethical concern beyond the workplace, OSH professionals also serve the public and future generations. Drawing from natural law ethics, communitarian ethics, and ecological ethics, this principle encourages actions that promote environmental sustainability, societal welfare, and intergenerational justice.

Case Study: “The Stormwater Shortcut”

Casey, an OSH and environmental health specialist at a manufacturing plant, is reviewing a new plan to expand outdoor material storage. The proposed location is near a stormwater runoff channel that drains into a local creek. Although the expansion technically meets the minimum regulatory buffer requirements, Casey is concerned that the risk of accidental chemical runoff during heavy rains—especially from stored drums and containers—could pose a hazard to the surrounding environment and community.

When Casey brings up the concern, the operations director replies, “We’re within the legal limits. Let’s not add costs for risks that haven’t happened.” Casey knows the plan is compliant but believes it falls short of the company’s stated environmental commitment and exposes the public to unnecessary risk.

Option 1: Recommend Alternative Storage Locations That Reduce Environmental Risk

- Pros:
 - Aligns with ethical stewardship and public health protection.
 - Reinforces organizational values and environmental credibility.
 - May prevent long-term reputational or legal issues.
- Cons:
 - May require redesign or investment in new infrastructure.
 - Could delay project implementation and affect timelines.

Option 2: Proceed with the Current Plan Since It Meets Legal Requirements

- Pros:

- Enables project continuity without added cost.
- Complies with current environmental regulations.
- Cons:
 - Prioritizes legal minimalism over ethical responsibility.
 - Exposes the company to future environmental or reputational risks.
 - Undermines public trust and moral leadership.

Option 3: Elevate Concerns to Senior Leadership or Environmental Oversight Board

- Pros:
 - Ensures wider review and alignment with organizational policy.
 - Shares decision-making responsibility.
 - Reinforces a culture of transparency and integrity.
- Cons:
 - May be seen as escalating unnecessarily.
 - Could create internal tension if leadership resists change.

Option 4: Monitor the Site Post-Implementation and Recommend Adjustments if Needed

- Pros:
 - Avoids upfront disruption while still exercising due diligence.
 - Allows time to gather data on actual impact.
- Cons:
 - Reactive rather than preventive.
 - Misses opportunity to prevent foreseeable harm.
 - May be perceived as compromising the public interest.

Ethical Analysis and Recommended Action

Option 1 reflects the clearest alignment with Commitment to Public Interest and Environmental Stewardship, emphasizing a proactive, precautionary approach that goes beyond minimum compliance. Option 3 supports this through organizational accountability. Option 2 is legally sufficient but ethically lacking, while Option 4 may delay necessary action until after potential harm occurs.

American Society of Safety Professionals (ASSP) Code of Conduct

1. Serve the public, employees, employers, clients, the Society, and the profession with fidelity, honesty and impartiality.
2. Treat others with respect, civility, and without discrimination or harassment in all professional relationships.
3. Abstain from behavior that will unjustly cause harm to the reputation of the Society, its members and the profession.
4. Continually improve professional knowledge, skills, competencies, and awareness of relevant new developments through training, education, networking and work experiences.
5. Consider qualifications before undertaking any professional activity and perform only those services that may be handled competently.
6. Make informed decisions in the performance of professional duties that adhere to all relevant laws, regulations and recognized standards of practice.
7. Inform all appropriate parties when professional judgment indicates that there is an unacceptable level of risk of injury, illness, property damage or environmental harm.
8. Maintain the confidentiality of information acquired through professional practice that is designated or generally recognized as non-public, confidential or privileged.
9. Accurately represent professional qualifications including education, credentials, designations, affiliations, titles and work experience.
10. 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.

Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP) Code of Ethics

1. HOLD paramount the safety and health of people, the protection of the environment and protection of property in the performance of professional duties and exercise their obligation to advise employers, clients, employees, the public, and appropriate authorities of danger and unacceptable risks to people, the environment, or property.
2. BE honest, fair, and impartial; act with responsibility and integrity. Adhere to high standards of ethical conduct with balanced care for the interests of the public, employers, clients, employees, colleagues, and the profession. Avoid all conduct or practice that is likely to discredit the profession or deceive the public.
3. ISSUE public statements only in an objective and truthful manner and only when founded upon knowledge of the facts and competence in the subject matter.
4. UNDERTAKE assignments only when qualified by education or experience in the specific technical fields involved. Accept responsibility for their continued professional development by acquiring and maintaining competence through continuing education, experience professional training, and keeping current on relevant legal issues.
5. AVOID deceptive acts that falsify or misrepresent their academic or professional qualifications. Not misrepresent or exaggerate their degree of responsibility in or for the subject matter of prior assignments. Presentations incident to the solicitation of employment shall not misrepresent pertinent facts concerning employers, employees, associates, or past accomplishments with the intent and purpose of enhancing their qualifications and their work.
6. CONDUCT their professional relations by the highest standards of integrity and avoid compromise of their professional judgment by conflicts of interest. When becoming aware of professional misconduct by a BCSP certificant, take steps to bring that misconduct to the attention of the Board of Certified Safety Professionals.
7. ACT in a manner free of bias, discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran status or any characteristic protected by the law of the applicable jurisdiction.
8. SEEK opportunities to be of constructive service in civic affairs and work for the advancement of the safety, health, and well-being of their community and their profession by sharing their knowledge and skills.

Board of Global Credentialing (BGC) Code of Ethics

1. Responsibilities to BGC credentialing programs, the profession, and the public.
 - 1.1. Certificant and candidate compliance with all organizational rules, policies, and legal requirements.
 - 1.1.a. Comply with laws, regulations, policies, and ethical standards governing professional practice.
 - 1.1.b. Provide accurate and truthful representations concerning all certification and recertification information.
 - 1.1.c. Maintain the security of BGC examination information and materials, including the prevention of unauthorized disclosures of test information.
 - 1.1.d. Cooperate with BGC concerning ethics matters and the collection of information related to an ethics matter.
 - 1.1.e. Report, upon a reasonable and clear factual basis, apparent violations of the ethics code by certificants and candidates.
 - 1.1.f. Refrain from public behavior that is clearly in violation of professional, ethical, or legal standards.
2. Responsibilities to clients, employers, employees, and the public.
 - 2.1. Education, experience, competency, and performance of professional services. A certificant/candidate must:
 - 2.1.a. Deliver competent services with objective and independent professional judgment in decision-making.
 - 2.1.b. Recognize the limitations of one's professional ability and provide services only when qualified. The certificant/candidate is responsible for determining the limits of his/her own professional abilities based on education, knowledge, skills, practice experience, and other relevant considerations.
 - 2.1.c. Maintain and respect the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained in the course of professional activities unless: the information is reasonably understood to pertain to unlawful activity, a court or governmental agency lawfully directs the release of the information, the client or the employer expressly authorizes the release of specific information, or the failure to release such information would likely result in death or serious physical harm to employees and/or the public.
 - 2.1.d. Properly use professional credentials and provide truthful and accurate representations concerning education, experience, competency, and the performance of services.
 - 2.1.e. Provide truthful and accurate representations to the public in advertising, public statements or representations, and in the preparation of estimates concerning costs, services, and expected results.

- 2.1.f. Recognize and respect the intellectual property rights of others and act in an accurate, truthful, and complete manner, including activities related to professional work and research.
 - 2.1.g. Affix or authorize the use of any issued BGC organization's seal, stamp, signature, or other signifier of certification by the certificant only when the document is prepared by the certificant/candidate or has been fully reviewed and approved by the certificant/candidate. Any such use does not represent BGC approval of the work so endorsed.
 - 2.1.h. Communicate clearly, to clients and/or employers, the potential consequences if professional decisions or judgments are overruled or disregarded.
- 2.2. Conflict of interest and appearance of impropriety.
- 2.2.a. Disclose, to clients and/or employers, significant circumstances that could be construed as a conflict of interest or an appearance of impropriety.
 - 2.2.b. Avoid conduct that could cause a conflict of interest with a client, employer, employee, or the public.
 - 2.2.c. Assure that a conflict of interest does not compromise legitimate interests of a client, employer, employee, or the public and does not influence or interfere with professional judgments.
 - 2.2.d. Refrain from offering or accepting significant payments, gifts, or other forms of compensation or benefits in order to secure work or that are intended to influence professional judgment.
- 2.3. Public health, safety, and the natural environment.
- 2.3.a. Follow appropriate health and safety procedures, in the course of performing professional duties, to protect clients, employers, employees, and the public from conditions where injury and damage are reasonably foreseeable.

American Industrial Hygiene Association (AIHA) Code of Ethics

1. Responsibilities to the Professional Organizations, the Profession and the Public.
 - 1.1. In order to satisfy organizational and legal policies and rules, members should:
 - 1.1.a. Comply with laws, regulations, policies, and ethical standards governing professional practice of industrial hygiene and related activities, including those of professional associations and credentialing organizations.
 - 1.1.b. Provide accurate and truthful information to professional associations and credentialing organizations.
 - 1.1.c. Cooperate with professional associations and credentialing organizations concerning ethics matters and the collection of information related to an ethics matter.
 - 1.1.d. Report apparent violations of applicable professional organizations' ethical standards to appropriate organizations and agencies upon a reasonable and clear factual basis.
 - 1.1.e. Refrain from any public behavior that is clearly in violation of accepted professional, ethical or legal standards.
 - 1.1.f. Promote equal opportunity and diversity in professional activities.
 - 1.1.g. Support and disseminate the association's ethics principles to other professionals.
2. Responsibilities to Clients, Employers, Employees and the Public.
 - 2.1. In order to provide ethical professional services, members should:
 - 2.1.a. Deliver competent services in a timely manner, and with objective and independent professional judgment in decision-making.
 - 2.1.b. Recognize the limitations of one's professional ability, and provide services only when qualified. The member is responsible for determining the limits of his/her own professional abilities based on education, knowledge, skills, practice experience, and other relevant considerations.
 - 2.1.c. Provide appropriate professional referrals when unable to provide competent professional assistance.
 - 2.1.d. Maintain and respect the confidentiality of sensitive information obtained in the course of professional or related activities unless: the information pertains to an illegal activity; a court or governmental agency lawfully directs the release of the information; the client/employer expressly authorizes the release of specific information; or, the failure to release such information would likely result in death or serious physical harm to employees and/or the public.

- 2.1.e. Properly use professional credentials and provide truthful and accurate representations concerning education, experience, competency and the performance of services.
 - 2.1.f. Provide truthful and accurate representations to the public in advertising, public statements/ representations, and in the preparation of estimates concerning costs, services, and expected results.
 - 2.1.g. Recognize and respect the intellectual property rights of others, and act in an accurate, truthful, and complete manner, including activities related to professional work and research.
 - 2.1.h. Affix or authorize the use of one's seal, stamp or signature only when the document is prepared by the certificant/candidate or someone under his/her direction and control.
 - 2.1.i. Refrain from business activities and practices that unlawfully restrict competition.
- 2.2. In order to satisfy organizational policies and legal requirements concerning possible conflicts of interest and similar issues, members should:
- 2.2.a. Disclose to clients or employers significant circumstances that could be construed as a conflict of interest, or an appearance of impropriety.
 - 2.2.b. Avoid conduct that could cause a conflict of interest with a client, employer, employee, or the public.
 - 2.2.c. Assure that a conflict of interest does not compromise legitimate interests of a client, employer, employee, or the public and does not influence/interfere with professional judgments.
 - 2.2.d. Refrain from offering, or accepting inappropriate payments, gifts, or other forms of compensation or benefits in order to secure work, or that are intended to influence professional judgment.
- 2.3. In order to satisfy organizational policies and legal requirements concerning public health and safety, members should:
- 2.3.a. Follow appropriate health and safety procedures in the course of performing professional work to protect clients, employers, employees, and the public from conditions where injury and damage are reasonably foreseeable.
 - 2.3.b. Inform appropriate management representatives and/or governmental bodies of violations of legal and regulatory requirements when obligated or otherwise clearly appropriate.
 - 2.3.c. Make reasonable efforts to ensure that the results of industrial hygiene assessments are communicated to exposed populations.

Health and Safety Professionals of Canada (HSCP) Code of Ethics

1. With the public,
 - 1.1. hold paramount the safety, health and welfare of the public and promote the value of the profession in protecting the public good
2. With employers and clients,
 - 2.1. represent their professional qualifications, knowledge, skills, and experience openly and accurately
 - 2.2. declare any potential or real conflict of interest and refrain from endeavours that abuse their professional affiliation and secure personal advantage
 - 2.3. seek equal consideration of all valid points of view
 - 2.4. provide accurate and independent advice and identify any limitations to proposed solutions
 - 2.5. respect and maintain the client's or employer's confidentiality to the extent possible
3. In seeking employment,
 - 3.1. compete fairly and transparently with other Members, represent their own work and not discredit or reflect unfavourably on the work of other safety professionals
4. With other members and the society,
 - 4.1. demonstrate personal professional development and improvement by maintaining up-to-date professional skills
 - 4.2. contribute to the exchange of knowledge, skills, and experience within the profession
 - 4.3. uphold the professional reputation of other Members and also report inappropriate behaviour
 - 4.4. truthfully represent their own work and acknowledge collaboration and external sources of information and guidance

Australian Institute of Health & Safety (AIHS) Code of Ethics

1. Honesty
 - 1.1. In professional practice including in managing data, providing advice and in financial matters
 - 1.2. In communication, appropriately acknowledging the input of others
2. Trustworthiness
 - 2.1. Reliable and credible as a trusted advisor to those to whom health and safety advice is given or who may be impacted by professional activities
3. Respect
 - 3.1. For the rights and dignity of all people taking account of the principles of human rights
 - 3.2. In avoiding actions or providing advice that may result in discrimination against individuals or groups
4. Courage
 - 4.1. Providing accurate and impartial advice to inform decisions even in the face of opposition.
5. Objectivity
 - 5.1. Ensuring that professional activities are as far as practical evidence-based
 - 5.2. Resisting unreasonably interest-based pressures to modify professional advice.
6. Impartiality
 - 6.1. Balancing competing duties to employer/client, workers, the public and the profession taking account of the primary duty to prevent harm
 - 6.2. Ensuring any sectional or personal interests do not impact on professional activities
 - 6.3. Avoiding circumstances which may compromise professional conduct or where conflicts of interest may arise.
7. Practicing competently
 - 7.1. Understanding relevant laws, regulation and recognized standards of practice as they relate to professional duties
 - 7.2. Maintaining and developing knowledge and skills
 - 7.3. Planning, conducting and reflecting on professional competence to understand my personal ability to undertake work before doing so
 - 7.4. Representing areas of competence honestly and objectively
 - 7.5. Ensuring persons working under my authority or supervision are competent to perform assigned tasks
 - 7.6. Acting on the basis of adequate knowledge.

8. Acting professionally
 - 8.1. Encouraging and supporting other OSH professionals
 - 8.2. Upholding the reputation and trustworthiness of the practices of the profession
 - 8.3. Having due regard for the effect professional activities may have on others
 - 8.4. Respecting the skills and competence of other professionals when soliciting for work, and not solicit by offering or paying inducements
 - 8.5. Contributing to organizational ethical capability
 - 8.6. Recognising threats to professional behaviour and seeking to avoid, manage or resolve such threats.
9. Managing information appropriately
 - 9.1. Maintaining confidentiality of medical and personal details as well as organizational information not related to health and safety, except as required to be disclosed under a law or by a court
 - 9.2. Considering legislation and 'right to know' of matters impacting on health and safety when managing OSH information
 - 9.3. Where internal disclosure does not result in corrective action, taking appropriate action based on professional advice and the health and safety risk involved.

Board of Canadian Registered Safety Professionals (BCRSP) Code of Ethics/Professional Conduct

1. Competence
 - 1.1. Maintain competence in carrying out responsibilities and provide services in an honest and diligent manner.
 - 1.2. Provide sound judgement in pursuance of their duties.
 - 1.3. Recognize their limitations and perform only those services that may be handled competently based on one's training and experience.
 - 1.4. Ensure persons working under their authority or supervision are competent to carry out the tasks assigned to them.
2. Integrity
 - 2.1. Maintain honesty, integrity, and objectivity in all activities.
 - 2.2. Protect and promote the safety and health of people, property and the environment above any consideration of self-interest.
 - 2.3. Avoid circumstances where compromise of conduct or conflict of interest may arise.
 - 2.4. Represent their qualifications and experience accurately and not knowingly make false or misleading statements.
3. Respect in the Workplace
 - 3.1. Support, promote and apply the principles of human rights, equity, dignity and respect in the workplace.
 - 3.2. Recognize that discrimination on the basis of race, creed, colour, language, national origin, political or religious affiliation, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family relationship and disability is prohibited.
4. Ongoing Professional Development
 - 4.1. Continue development throughout their career and support and encourage fellow certificants to develop skills, knowledge, and abilities.
5. Confidentiality
 - 5.1. Protect the confidentiality of all acquired information and disclose such information only when properly authorized or when legally obligated to do so.
6. Requirements
 - 6.1. Keep apprised of all relevant laws, regulations and recognized standards of practice as it relates to their duties.
7. Support of the Safety Profession and Other Professionals
 - 7.1. Uphold the honour and prestige of the profession.
 - 7.2. Recognize and respect the original work, integrity and ability of their peers.

8. Support of the BCRSP Certifications

- 8.1. Comply with the relevant provisions of the BCRSP bylaws, policies and certification scheme.
- 8.2. Make claims regarding BCRSP certification only with respect to the scope for which certification has been granted.
- 8.3. Not use the certification in such a manner as to bring the certification body into disrepute, and not make any statement regarding the certification which the certification body may consider misleading or unauthorized.
- 8.4. Discontinue the use of all claims to certification that contains any reference to the certification body or certification upon suspension or withdrawal of certification, and to return any certificates issued by the certification body.
- 8.5. Not use the certificate in a misleading manner.
- 8.6. Abstain from behaviour that will cause harm to the reputation of the BCRSP and its certificants.
- 8.7. Maintain the security of the BCRSP examination information and materials, including the prevention of unauthorized disclosures of test information.

9. Accountability (Adherence)

- 9.1. Each certificant will rely on the BCRSP to protect the integrity of the BCRSP certifications. The Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) is tasked with ensuring that responsibility is fulfilled in a fair and impartial manner. The PCC will be solely responsible for ensuring BCRSP Policy is followed to investigate complaints or allegation of misconduct against certificants.
- 9.2. Complaints or allegations of misconduct against certificants found to be justified by the PCC will be referred to the Discipline Committee for review.
- 9.3. The BCRSP may disclose any disciplinary or enforcement decision/action against a certificant along with associated information, to other organizations including without limitation, organizations related to health and safety, law enforcement agencies, and regulatory bodies.

Ethical Decision-Making

For an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) professional, applying an ethical decision model is crucial in navigating the complex and often sensitive situations. An ethical decision model provides a structured framework to help individuals make decisions that are ethically sound and well-reasoned. While there are various models, a common and comprehensive one involves the following steps:

1. **Recognize the Ethical Issue:** The first step is identifying the situation that requires an ethical decision. This involves discerning the ethical aspects of a scenario, distinguishing them from mere preferences, or business decisions. For example, unsafe working conditions, inadequate safety equipment, or conflicting interests between safety and production goals.
2. **Gather Information:** Collect all relevant facts about the situation. This includes understanding the context, the stakeholders involved, and the potential impact of different decisions. It's important to consider legal, social, and personal dimensions. Information could include workplace safety standards, legal requirements, and the specific details of the safety concern. Understand the context and the potential risks involved.
3. **Identify the Affected Parties:** Determine who will be affected by the decision considering the direct and indirect stakeholders such as employees, customers, partners, and potentially the broader community or environment.
4. **Consider the Available Alternatives:** List all possible actions. At this stage, it's crucial to brainstorm a range of options without yet evaluating their ethical implications. Explore all possible actions to address the safety concern, from the most effective (e.g., immediate shutdown of unsafe equipment) to more measured approaches (e.g., phased safety improvements, training).
5. **Evaluate the Alternatives Using Ethical Theories:** Assess each alternative through ethical lenses such as utilitarianism (maximizing overall safety), deontological ethics (adhering to safety regulations and rights), and virtue ethics (fostering a culture of safety and responsibility). This step helps to highlight the ethical dimensions of each option.
6. **Consider the Consequences:** Analyze the short-term and long-term consequences of each alternative, including potential safety improvements, impacts on employee health, costs, and the company's reputation.
7. **Make a Decision:** Choose the option that best aligns with ethical principles, taking into account the balance of good over harm, rights, justice, and practical constraints. Make decisions that ethically balances safety, compliance, and organizational interests, ensuring the well-being of workers is prioritized.

8. **Implement the Decision:** Execute the chosen action plan, which may involve coordinating with management, training employees, updating safety protocols, or introducing new safety equipment.
9. **Reflect on the Outcome:** After the decision has been implemented, reflect on its outcomes. Consider what you have learned from the process, evaluate the effectiveness of the decision in improving workplace safety. Consider any unintended consequences and lessons learned for future decision-making.
10. **Seek Feedback:** Engage with stakeholders, including employees, management, and external safety experts, to gather feedback on the decision and its implementation. This feedback can offer valuable insights and contribute to continuous improvement in safety practices. Seek advice from mentors and reasonable peers to gain different perspectives on the decision made and its implications. Mine for valuable insights for future ethical decision-making.

This ethical decision model emphasizes a systematic and reflective approach to decision-making, encouraging individuals to consider a wide range of factors and perspectives to arrive at ethically responsible choices.

Ethical Dilemma

An **ethical dilemma** is a situation in which a person faces a decision involving conflicting moral principles or values, where choosing one course of action means transgressing another ethical standard. In other words, it's a challenging scenario in which there's no clear, morally correct option because all available choices involve some ethical compromise or trade-off.

OSH as a Moral Agency

In each approach, the core principles of the ethical theory inform the standards and practices expected of OSH professionals, offering different lenses through which to view and resolve ethical dilemmas in the workplace. These ideas illustrate how the philosophical framework can shape the ethical and conduct standards in the field of occupational safety and health, reflecting different priorities and approaches to ensuring worker safety and health.

A well-rounded OSH professional would incorporate elements from all these ethical theories into practice. For example, while adhering to legal requirements (deontology), a safety professional might also consider the broader consequences of their actions (consequentialism), act with integrity and compassion (virtue ethics), and respect the intrinsic rights of employees to a safe working environment (natural law). This holistic approach ensures that OSH professionals are equipped to handle various ethical challenges and scenarios in their practice.

OSH professionals serve as moral agents by prioritizing the safety and well-being of workers, upholding ethical standards, making informed and principled decisions, and fostering a culture of safety and continuous improvement within the organization.

As a moral agent, the OSH professional not only ensures compliance with laws and regulations but also upholds ethical standards and acts in the best interest of the employees and the organization.

These moral principles underscore the comprehensive moral framework within which OSH professionals operate, emphasizing not just the safety of individuals but also ethical integrity, legal compliance, and social responsibility in their practice. By adhering to these principles, OSH professionals play a crucial role in creating and maintaining safe work environments, ensuring the health and well-being of employees, and contributing positively to the ethical culture of their organizations.

5 Rules of Ethical Engagement

1. Establish the dialogue
 - Establish a script that guides the thinking.
 - Consider tactics and timing
 - Rehearse, reasonable peer, due diligence, research, reflect
 - Explore all options to avoid conflict
 - Creativity and clarification often reduce conflict
 - Compromise between values often possible
2. Frame the context.
 - Set ground rules for the conversation
 - Consider confidentiality, constructive support, affirmative conflict resolution.
 - Describe the scenario so that all understand the situation.
 - Identify the problem/concern, actors, stakeholders.
 - Identify the legal or moral authority.
 - OSH standards, discrimination, liabilities, due care, due process
3. Seek consensus of values and principles
 - State your opinions, position, and biases.
 - Facilitate agreement of fair consideration of ethical values and principles that might apply.
4. Identify options

- Discuss scenarios, choices of action/decisions and potential outcomes.
5. Facilitate a decision.
- Leverage OHS professional ethics to influence the decision making.
 - Establish agreement and disagreement of action.

Hierarchy/Sequence Ethical Decision-Making Models

For an occupational safety and health professional, a Hierarchy/Sequence Ethical Decision-Making Model offers a methodical approach to resolving safety and health ethical dilemmas in the workplace. These models adopt a step-by-step process, starting with the identification of the ethical issue, followed by gathering information, assessing ethical principles, evaluating potential courses of action, decision-making, and implementing solutions. OSH professionals should consider all aspects of a situation, including legal requirements, professional standards, potential risks, and the well-being of workers, thus leading to well-informed and ethically sound decisions impacting workplace safety and health. Consider how these Ethical Decision-Making Models apply to a scenario.

Scenario: A safety manager at a manufacturing plant discovers that a particular machine is operating without adequate safety guards, posing a risk to workers. The company is under pressure to meet production targets, and shutting down the machine for repairs could cause significant delays.

Consequentialist Model: Evaluates decisions based on the outcomes they produce. Safety professionals might assess the potential benefits and harms of their actions, striving to maximize positive outcomes for employee safety and health.

- Would the benefits of continuing to operate the machine outweigh the risks?
- What are the potential consequences of an accident versus production delays?

Deontological Model: Involves adherence to established ethical rules and professional duties. Safety professionals might consult industry standards and organizational policies to guide their decisions.

- Does operating the machine without safety guards violate industry safety standards or company policies?
- Is it the duty of the safety manager to enforce these standards?

Virtue Ethics Model: Focuses on the character and virtues of the decision-maker, encouraging actions that exemplify professional integrity and moral character.

- What decision aligns with the virtues of a responsible safety professional?
- Does allowing the machine to operate reflect integrity and care for workers' well-being?

Integrated Ethical Decision Model: This approach synthesizes elements from various ethical models. Safety professionals might consider the outcomes, rules, and virtues collectively in their decision-making process.

- How does combining the outcomes, rules, and virtues inform the decision?
- Is there a balance that can be achieved between production needs and safety standards?

Zone-Based Model: Classifies ethical decisions into zones based on their adherence to professional standards and potential impacts. Safety professionals navigate these zones to find the most ethically sound decision.

- Which 'zone' does this decision fall into?
- Is it in the 'green zone' where safety and compliance are prioritized, or the 'yellow/red zone' where legal compliance and ethical boundaries are being pushed?

Ethical decision-making models provide a structured framework to approach complex ethical issues in the workplace. The model helps in evaluating situations where professional responsibilities might conflict with legal, organizational, or personal values. By considering factors like consequences of actions, adherence to professional codes, personal integrity, and the impact on employees and the organization, these models guide OSH professionals in making decisions that uphold safety standards, legal compliance, and ethical integrity. A structured approach ensures that decisions are not only legally sound but also morally responsible, contributing to a safe and healthy work environment.

Model 1: Eight-Step Social Sciences Model (Deontology and Consequentialism)

The prevalent model for ethical decision-making used by OSH professionals typically revolves around adhering to ethical codes and considering the consequences of actions on those under their care, such as clients or workers. This model is particularly relevant in legal contexts where testimony might be required. It aims to mitigate emotional biases, ensuring rational decision-making. Common in fields like social sciences and counseling, the model emphasizes involving affected individuals in the decision process and upholding their rights, paralleling how safety and health professionals protect their workers.

Step	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	Identify the problem or dilemma. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does a problem or dilemma actually exist? • Is this a moral, ethical, legal, or professional problem? • Is it a combination of more than one of these? • How can you know the nature of the problem? • Would you consult at this early stage as you are identifying the problem? • How might you begin the process of consultation with your client about the nature of the problem? 	
2	Identify the potential issues involved. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How might you best evaluate the rights, responsibilities, and welfare of all those involved and those who are affected by the decision, including your own welfare as a practitioner? • How can you best promote your client's independence and self-determination? • What actions have the least chance of bringing harm to your client? • What decision will best safeguard the client's welfare? • What principles can you use in prioritizing the potential issues involved in this situation? • Are there any ways to encourage the client to participate in identifying and determining potential ethical issues? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (rights- based) • Consequentialism (negative and positive) • Care-based Ethics
3	Review the relevant ethical codes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What guidance can you find on the specific problem under review by consulting with the professional codes? • Are your values in agreement with the specific ethical code in question? • How clear and specific are the codes on the specific area under consideration? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology • Virtue ethics
4	Know the applicable laws and regulations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any laws or regulations that have a bearing on the situation under consideration? • What are the specific and relevant state and federal laws that apply to the ethical dilemma? • What are the rules, regulations, and policies of the agency or institution where you work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology

5	<p>Obtain consultation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know where to go to obtain consultation with professionals who are knowledgeable about ethical issues? • Assuming that you will consult with a colleague or a supervisor, what would you expect from this consultation? • What kinds of questions do you want to ask of those with whom you consult? • With whom do you seek consultation? Do you consult only with those who share your orientation, or do you look for consultants with different perspectives? • How can you use the consultation process as an opportunity to test the justification of a course of action you are inclined to take? • What kinds of information do you document when you consult? 	
6	<p>Consider possible and probable courses of action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some ways that you can brainstorm many possible courses of action? • Do you have a systematic method for analyzing ethical obligations and possible courses of action? • Are you willing to involve your client in the discussion of the various courses of action? • What might you document pertaining to discussions with your client about probable courses of action? 	
7	<p>Enumerate the consequences of various decisions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you best evaluate the potential consequences of each course of action, before implementing a particular action plan? • Are you willing to involve your client in the discussion of the implications of each course of action for the client? • What ethical principles can you use as a framework for evaluating the consequences of a given course of action? • Examine the consequences of various decisions for your client, for you as a professional, and for the profession in general. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism
8	<p>Decide on what appears to be the best course of action.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After carefully considering all the information you have gathered, how do you know what seems to be the best action to take? • Do you solicit the input of your client in making this decision at this phase? • Once you have formulated a plan of action, do you ask for feedback from a colleague or supervisor? • Once the course of action has been implemented, what are some ways that you might evaluate the course of action? • Are you willing to follow up to determine the outcomes and see if further action is necessary? 	

Model 2: Eight-Step “Right versus Wrong” and then “Right versus Right” Model

This sequential model for ethical decision-making starts by identifying if a situation involves a clear choice between right and wrong. If this is not the case, the model then explores the possibility of a right versus right scenario, where a decision-maker must choose between two equally ethical options. This process helps in carefully evaluating complex ethical situations where straightforward answers are not apparent.

Step	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	Recognize that there is a moral issue, determine who the “agent” is, and gather the relevant facts.	
2	Determine preferred action and alternative action to resolve dilemma. Then test for the presence of a right versus wrong situation beginning in Step 3.	
3	Test preferred action for legality. If the preferred action is illegal, do not proceed with preferred action. Test alternative action for legality. If the alternative action is illegal, do not proceed with alternative action. If actions are not illegal, progress to Step 4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology
4	Assess preferred/alternative actions against at least two moral tests for temptation (e.g., mirror test, front page test, role model test, stench test). If the preferred/alternative action fails two or more tests, do not proceed with action. If preferred/alternative action fails one moral test for temptation, progress to Step 5 with caution and test for right versus right paradigms. If preferred/alternative action passes all moral tests for temptation, progress to Step 5 and test for right versus right paradigms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuition-based Approach • Consequentialism
5	Analyze situation as a right versus right paradigm. Determine if the dilemma can be classified as a truth versus loyalty, individual versus community, short-term versus long-term, and/or justice versus mercy dilemma. If the situation does not fit the paradigm, it is not a right versus right dilemma – rethink situation to re-frame it as a right versus right paradigm or generate additional actions to consider and start over using this model. If it is a right versus right paradigm, proceed with Step 6.	
6	Determine the “higher right” (e.g., truth versus loyalty) for the actions being considered by analyzing for each “right” (e.g., truth or loyalty each being represented by a specific course of action) the consequences (ends-based), rules/duties (rules-based), and virtues (care-based).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism • Deontology • Virtue or Care-based Ethics
7	Make the decision as to the higher right and resolve the dilemma by executing the action representing the higher right. This decision step is important and is the most frequently overlooked step in the process. People tend to process the problem but never make a decision or to act on the decision. It is important to come to a conclusion, decide, and act, then revisit and reflect. Note: there could be multiple resolutions possible using the combination of philosophical approaches in Step 6, since the three philosophical approaches could result in supporting a different “higher right.” If there is not a clear-cut “either-or” winner, reflect if there is a third way out which is a compromise between the two rights/actions and actually supports both.	
8	Reflect on the decision (for future reference).	

Model 3: Laws, Standards, Rules, Practices and Consequences Five-Step Model (Deontology and Consequentialism)

This model is practical for everyday OSH decisions, such as selecting the most appropriate occupational exposure limits (like PELs, TLVs®, RELs, or other guidelines) for interpreting data on air contaminant exposure. In this context, the model assists in resolving conflicts by guiding the choice towards the action that maximizes the greatest good or benefit. This approach is not only about adherence to standards but also involves evaluating the broader impact of decisions on workplace safety and health.

The process involves initially asking rule-based, deontological-like questions to narrow down options. The answers that best protect public health are considered the most ethical in this framework. Notably, the most ethical choice may sometimes conflict with legal or business best practices, highlighting a common tension between ethical considerations and other organizational objectives. This model, by prioritizing worker and public health, underscores the ethical complexities professionals may encounter in decision-making.

Step	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	What do existing laws and regulations say on this issue?	• Deontology (Rule-based)
2	In the absence of any laws or regulations, are there any consensus standards that provide guidance?	• Deontology (Rule-Based)
3	If there are no laws, regulations or consensus standards, what is the standard industry practice?	• Deontology (Duty-Based) • Relativism
4	In the absence of laws or regulations, consensus standards and general industry practices, what is the most technically correct approach?	• Deontology (Duty-based) • Consequentialism (Results-based) • Relativism • Nihilism
5	In cases of conflict among rules or if rules are not sufficient, does the action protect the health and well-being of workers and the public from workplace hazards?	• Consequentialism (Results-based) • Deontology (Rights-based)

Model 4: Reason-Based Seven-Step Model (Integrated)

This model is a comprehensive approach that incorporates three major ethical perspectives based on rational thinking. In its sixth step, after determining possible actions, the model applies each of the three philosophical approaches to these actions to evaluate their ethical validity. This includes assessing the consequences, the duties involved, the rights protected, and the care-based virtues evident in each action. Different ethical conclusions might emerge when applying these varied approaches. However, this method allows for a thorough analysis of the ethical strengths and weaknesses of each potential action. Moreover, it necessitates an evaluation of personal and professional values, aiding in clarifying issues for a more informed decision-making process.

Step	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	Gather facts carefully, including the context in which the action occurred, and define as clearly as possible the ethical issue.	
2	Identify who will be impacted by the decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism (Results-based)
3	Refer to the code of ethics, guiding principles and other professional guidelines and relevant laws/regulations for guidance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (Rule-based)
4	Clarify the personal and professional values as they relate to the situation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology • Virtue Ethics • Relativism
5	Formulate alternate course of action and define the outcomes for parties impacted by decision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism
6	Evaluate the potential courses of action (preferred action and alternative) by: (1) reviewing the practical consequences of each action; (2) evaluating the action to determine if it could be universally applied; and (3) evaluating the action against the reciprocity principle (do what you want others to do to you).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism • Deontology (universality) • Virtue and Care-based Ethics
7	Make a decision and act accordingly.	

Model 5: Reason-Based Five-Step Model (Integrated)

This model is a concise yet comprehensive approach that integrates the three primary ethical perspectives based on reasoning. It also incorporates additional philosophical approaches, offering a broad spectrum of ethical considerations. This versatility in encompassing various ethical frameworks makes it a robust tool for decision-making, especially in complex scenarios where different ethical viewpoints need to be balanced.

Reason	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	What benefits and what harms will each course of action produce, and which alternative will lead to the best overall consequences?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism (Results-based)
2	What moral rights do the affected parties have, and which course of action best respects those rights?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (Rights-based)
3	Which course of action treats everyone the same, except where there is a morally justifiable reason not to, and does not show favoritism or discrimination?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue Ethics • Ethics of Care • Relativism • Contractualism
4	Which course of action advances the common good?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism (Results-based) • Contractualism
5	Which course of action develops moral virtues?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ethics of Care • Virtue Ethics • Existentialism

Reason	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	Will my work result in added injury or any other disadvantage to the public, client, my employer or employees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism (Results-based)
2	Am I using resources wisely to prevent harm to the public and/or personnel?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism (Results-based) • Deontology (Rights-based) • Virtue-ethics
3	Which course of action treats everyone the same, except where there is a morally justifiable reason not to, and does not show favoritism or discrimination?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue Ethics • Care Ethics
4	Am I confident that my judgments use objective criteria in compliance with laws, regulations, policies and ethical standards of conduct?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontological- (Rule-based)
5	Are resources being used for purposes that could be embarrassing for my profession, employer, client, government, or family if reported publicly?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue Ethics • Consequentialism

Model 6: Colored Zones Model (Deontology and Consequentialism)

This model introduces a "zone" approach for safety and health professionals, guiding them to ask, "Which zone are you operating under?" It's rooted in the deontological principle that professionals have a duty to use resources and funds effectively for health betterment while preventing misuse. The zones reflect different levels of rigor in deontological-based rules, and some questions posed also have consequential implications. The zones are:

1. **Green Zone:** Duties/actions that safeguard public, client, employer, and employee safety and health. These actions comply with relevant laws, regulations, policies, and ethics codes and are related to professional expertise. They are free of conflicts of interest or improper personal gain.
2. **Yellow Zone:** Duties that comply with laws, regulations, or policies but aren't aligned with the best safety and health practices or standards.
3. **Red Zone:** Actions with foreseeable adverse safety and health impacts or those prohibited by laws, regulations, policies, or ethics codes. Examples include false certification for recertification, prematurely disclosing sample results to enforcement agencies, and manipulating data to meet client needs.

This approach helps professionals assess and categorize their actions based on ethical considerations and legal compliance.

Model 7: Intent, Motive and Circumstance Model (Deontology, Virtue Ethics, Consequentialism)

This ethical decision-making model emphasizes the importance of intention, motive, and circumstance in resolving ethical challenges. It proposes that an action is ethically permissible if it is backed by good intentions, noble motives, and appropriate circumstances. The model involves several steps:

Intent: Evaluating the moral permissibility of an action based on the principle of respect and the purpose behind the action.

Motive: Examining why the action is being taken, focusing on motives beyond self-interest or conformity, and emphasizing respect for the profession.

Circumstance: Considering whether the specific circumstances justify the action and if there were better alternatives with more noble intentions or motives.

Decision: In complex situations, involving a committee in decision-making to consider all factors, including legal and moral impacts.

Action: The final step of consciously taking action based on the ethical analysis.

Outcome: Analyzing the outcomes using moral principles like respect, utility, double effect, and proportionality. It also involves acknowledging unintended side effects and due diligence in foreseeing potential negative outcomes.

The model provides a structured approach for safety and health professionals to navigate ethical dilemmas, ensuring that decisions are made with a comprehensive understanding of their ethical implications.

Model 8: Comprehensive 12-Step Process for Decision-Making (Integrated)

This model is a comprehensive synthesis of moral positions, forming a sequential approach to ethical decision-making. Initially, it applies deontological approaches, emphasizing duties and rules, and then progresses to include other philosophical perspectives like consequentialism, relativism, and virtue ethics.

This model is particularly suited for complex and challenging situations, given its depth and breadth. It can be time-consuming but offers a thorough analysis by covering various ethical approaches. The model allows for either a step-by-step progression or a parallel approach based on the major ethical categories. This flexibility enables a nuanced and well-rounded ethical evaluation.

Step	Questions/Actions	Philosophical Approach
1	<p>What are the facts? Gather facts to determine the leading decision or action that you want implement.</p> <p>Ask these questions if relevant as part of the information-gathering process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What exactly is the ethical issue being encountered? • Who will be impacted by the decision or action? • What services and outcomes are expected to be performed? • What are the technical issues involved in the decision or action? • What are the expectations and relationships of the various parties involved in the decision or action? • Is there a common understanding of these expectations and relationships? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism
2	Determine alternatives to that decision or action and repeat Step 1.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism
3	Does the decision or action violate a law, regulation or standard? If so, choose an alternative decision or action and repeat the above steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (negative)
4	Does the decision or action violate a principle or standard contained in an applicable code of professional or organizational ethics? If so, choose an alternative decision or action and repeat the above steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (negative)
5	<p>Does the decision or action violate what is a morally binding law, rule, or duty?</p> <p>Would the decision or action not likely to be applied universally?</p> <p>Is the decision or action contrary to the golden rule?</p> <p>If the reply is “yes” to any of these questions, choose an alternative decision or action and repeat the above steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (negative) • Care-based Ethics
6	Does the decision or action violate the rights of workers or the public? If so, choose an alternative decision or action and repeat the above steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deontology (rights-based)
7	Does the decision or action fail a test of moral temptation (e.g., the morning-after test, the front-page test, the mirror test, the role reversal test, and the commonsense test)? If so, choose an alternative decision or action and repeat the above steps.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intuition-based Approach (negative) • Consequentialism
8	<p>Are there virtues (e.g., honor, compassion) associated with the decision or action (and its alternatives) that could/should be nurtured and promoted?</p> <p>If so, the decision or action may be appropriate – continue with the following steps.</p> <p>If not, reconsider another decision or action and repeat above steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Virtue Ethics

9	<p>What are the short-term and long-term consequences of the decision or action and alternative options?</p> <p>Of all the alternatives, will this decision or action generate the most “good” (such as lowest amount of risk; highest degree of health protection) for the greatest number of people? If so, proceed with the next step.</p> <p>If not, investigate other alternatives and repeat the above steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism
10	<p>More specifically, are the consequences consistent with the moral principles of respect, non- malevolence, benevolence, integrity, justice, fairness, and double effect (for example).</p> <p>If the consequences are consistent with these moral principles, proceed with the next step.</p> <p>If not, investigate other alternatives and repeat the above steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consequentialism • Virtue Ethics
11	<p>Can the decision or action be defended using reason if brought before a court or peers?</p> <p>If it can be defended, proceed with decision or action.</p> <p>If not, consider other alternatives and repeat the above steps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reasoned-based Ethical Approaches
12	<p>Still cannot decide.</p> <p>Get a second opinion from trusted reasonable peers with experience and a strong commitment to the profession. Repeats steps.</p>	

Persuasion, Influence, Leverage, and Manipulation in Safety Practice

Effective communication is a defining competency for occupational safety and health (OSH) professionals. Beyond conveying information, OSH practitioners must engage diverse stakeholders, build consensus, and drive behavioral change to support safety initiatives. In fulfilling this role, understanding the nuanced distinctions between persuasion, influence, leverage, and manipulation is essential. Each represents a different approach to guiding behavior—and each carries distinct ethical implications. Mastery of these distinctions allows safety professionals to act both effectively and ethically in complex organizational settings.

Persuasion is the transparent and ethical communication of ideas intended to positively shift beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors. Rooted in classical rhetorical elements—logos (logic), ethos (credibility), and pathos (emotional resonance)—persuasion involves presenting clear, evidence-based arguments to encourage voluntary and informed decision-making. For instance, a safety professional might demonstrate how a proposed ergonomics program measurably reduces strain injuries, thereby fostering acceptance and adoption without coercion.

Influence, while related, operates more subtly. It develops over time through trust, integrity, and relational credibility. Rather than relying on formal authority or overt persuasion, influence shapes behavior by example and sustained engagement. A safety leader who consistently models safe practices, treats employees with fairness, and builds positive rapport may find that their influence permeates the organization, prompting others to internalize safety values and act accordingly—often without being asked.

Leverage refers to the strategic application of resources, positional authority, or institutional mechanisms to achieve desired safety outcomes. While more directive than influence or persuasion, leverage can be used ethically to mobilize action when urgency or noncompliance demands it. An OSH professional might reference regulatory standards or draw on executive backing to ensure timely implementation of critical safety measures, such as infrastructure upgrades or mandatory training. When applied judiciously, leverage aligns operational necessity with ethical responsibility.

Manipulation, in contrast, represents a departure from ethical practice. It involves using deception, emotional exploitation, or withholding information to influence behavior. Although it may produce short-term compliance, manipulation undermines trust, damages relationships, and weakens the foundation of a sustainable safety culture. A manipulated workforce may eventually resist or disengage, eroding the credibility of the safety function. For example, exaggerating risk to scare employees into compliance may backfire, diminishing long-term trust in the professional's guidance.

For OSH professionals committed to ethical leadership, distinguishing among these approaches is not merely theoretical—it is essential to their credibility and effectiveness. Persuasion, influence, and ethical leverage are legitimate tools that, when used with transparency and respect, contribute positively to safety culture and performance. Manipulation, by contrast, is antithetical to professional ethics and should be categorically avoided.

To uphold ethical communication standards, safety professionals should prioritize transparency—clearly articulating their objectives, rationale, and evidence. They should consistently demonstrate fairness and integrity, which serve as the foundation for relational influence. When using leverage, they must ensure it is exercised responsibly and in alignment with both ethical principles and organizational values. Most critically, they must reject any tactics rooted in manipulation or coercion, recognizing that the trust and respect of the workforce are indispensable to long-term safety success.

By applying these distinctions with clarity and integrity, OSH professionals can communicate with purpose and precision. In doing so, they reinforce their role as trusted advisors and ethical leaders—driving not just compliance, but lasting commitment to a culture of safety.

The Adaptive Influencer

“The OHS profession or role advises and supports management in its overall task of managing risks to prevent or mitigate work-related fatalities, injuries, and illnesses. The OHS Professional is a key advisor, strategist, and pilot to the organization’s leadership in fully integrating the management of OHS risk into sustainable business practice at all levels” (INSHPO, 2017, p. 10). To fulfill this role, safety professionals must be effective communicators and adaptive influencers, shaping attitudes, decisions, and behaviors throughout the organization (Snyder, 2018).

The concepts of **logos**, **ethos**, and **pathos** are foundational elements of persuasion introduced by Aristotle (4th century BCE) in his treatise *Rhetoric*. These three modes of persuasion—logical reasoning (*logos*), credibility or character of the speaker (*ethos*), and emotional appeal (*pathos*)—form the basis of rhetorical theory and are extensively discussed in Aristotle’s work. The classical rhetorical triad provides a powerful lens through which to understand and enhance the OSH professional’s capacity to influence. Modern frameworks such as Robert Cialdini’s principles of persuasion (2007), Ronald Heifetz’s adaptive leadership model (1994; Heifetz et al., 2009), and Cohen and Bradford’s concept of influence without authority (2017) enrich this classical foundation, making it relevant to today’s safety challenges.

Logos—the appeal to logic and reason

Safety professionals often rely on data-driven arguments, citing injury trends, audit results, and regulatory guidance to make the case for change. Logical appeals establish clarity, reduce ambiguity, and support rational decision-making. However, data alone is insufficient. The persuasive power of logos is amplified when coupled with credibility and relational trust. As Freiwald et al. (2015) demonstrate, safety leadership rooted in

fairness, consistency, and transparency fosters a culture where logic is both heard and trusted. Cialdini's principle of authority strengthens this approach by reinforcing the idea that people are more likely to accept arguments from credible, knowledgeable figures (Cialdini, 2007). When safety professionals present well-reasoned recommendations within a framework of established credibility, their influence extends beyond technical compliance.

Moreover, logical influence in safety often unfolds without direct authority. Safety professionals typically work across departments and must engage leaders, supervisors, and frontline workers through persuasion rather than command. Cohen and Bradford (2017) describe this as "influence without authority," emphasizing the importance of reciprocal relationships and resource exchange. The safety professional might provide expert insight, training, or problem-solving in exchange for operational cooperation. In adaptive contexts—where the problem is not purely technical but tied to culture or values—logical influence must also frame the nature of the adaptive challenge. Heifetz (1994) calls on leaders to "get on the balcony," viewing issues from a strategic distance to distinguish between technical problems and those that require behavioral or cultural transformation. In safety, this may mean recognizing that repeated PPE violations are not merely a matter of training but a symptom of broader disengagement or distrust within the workforce.

Ethos—the appeal to character and credibility

Trust is a prerequisite for influence in safety. OSH professionals must consistently demonstrate ethical integrity, transparency, and alignment with organizational values. Their influence grows not only from what they know, but from how they behave. When a safety leader upholds the same standards in every context, whether speaking to executives or laborers, they become a moral anchor within the organization.

This ethical consistency supports Heifetz's model of adaptive leadership, which requires practitioners to maintain disciplined focus on long-term challenges even when faced with pressure to revert to quick fixes (Heifetz et al., 2009). For example, if a safety professional recognizes that contractor safety lapses stem from misaligned incentives rather than ignorance, they must hold to that diagnosis even when stakeholders push for superficial training fixes. Their ethos, built on courage, transparency, and fidelity to ethical standards, becomes the force that keeps the organization on a path toward deeper reform. When formal authority is lacking, as is often the case, Cohen and Bradford (2017) stress that trust-based relationships become the most powerful leverage point. The safety professional's credibility is their currency.

Ethical leadership is consistently linked to enhanced safety climates, where individuals are more likely to report hazards, comply with procedures, and participate in proactive safety behaviors. Freiwald et al. (2015) affirm that employees' perceptions of a leader's integrity, concern for others, and fairness directly influence their safety motivation. Safety professionals who exemplify ethical behavior—who listen actively, enforce standards fairly, and consistently model best practices—create the conditions for ethical reciprocity. Their presence becomes a moral anchor within the organization, aligning

closely with Aristotle's ethos and Cialdini's principle of commitment and consistency (Cialdini, 2007). This form of ethical leadership is not about positional power but about consistently demonstrating values that invite others to follow.

Pathos—the appeal to emotion

Pathos should not be underestimated in a field too often reduced to compliance and technical procedures. Emotions such as fear, empathy, pride, and solidarity are powerful motivators. A safety message that evokes concern for co-workers' wellbeing, or that connects safe practices with the pride of craftsmanship and family responsibility, can be more persuasive than any data point. This is where Cialdini's principles of liking and reciprocity come into play (2007). People respond to those they respect and who demonstrate care for their interests. Safety professionals who build rapport, listen actively, and show genuine concern for employee welfare can ethically use emotional influence to motivate behavior change.

Pathos also plays a critical role in adaptive leadership. Adaptive challenges often involve loss, discomfort, or identity threats—such as changes in long-standing procedures or questioning of ingrained habits. Heifetz advises leaders to regulate this distress, helping people face uncomfortable realities while maintaining their capacity to act (Heifetz et al., 2009). In safety, this might mean facilitating open conversations about why near-miss reporting is low, not by blaming workers, but by acknowledging fears of reprisal and inviting honest reflection. The emotional influence required here is one of empathy and reassurance, grounded in trust and a shared sense of purpose. **Pathos**, the appeal to emotion, is perhaps the most underutilized yet potent dimension of safety influence. Beyond procedures and metrics lie human concerns: fear of injury, desire for dignity, pride in work, and concern for coworkers. Pathos engages these emotions, creating a visceral connection to safety outcomes. According to Freiwald et al. (2015), ethical leaders who express genuine care and foster emotional safety environments help build trust and openness. This, in turn, encourages workers to engage more deeply with safety processes—not out of obligation, but from a shared sense of responsibility and belonging.

In combination, logos, ethos, and pathos offer safety professionals a versatile and ethical framework for communication and leadership. Logos ensures that recommendations are grounded in logic and evidence; ethos builds trust through consistent and ethical conduct; and pathos engages hearts and minds, making safety personally meaningful. When augmented with modern strategies like influence without authority, adaptive leadership, and evidence-based persuasion, this classical triad becomes a powerful guide for navigating the real-world complexities of OSH practice.

Communication is a Superpower

In the multiverse of occupational safety and health, communication is more than a skill—it is a superpower. While technical knowledge and regulatory expertise form the foundation of a safety professional's role, it is through communication that real change happens. Whether guiding an organization through a critical safety initiative or encouraging a frontline worker to speak up about a hazard, the ability to connect, convey, and convince defines the safety professional's true influence. This superpower allows them to navigate complex human dynamics, foster trust, and shape behaviors that ultimately protect lives.

At the core of this communicative power is persuasion—the ability to present ideas, data, and arguments in a way that encourages voluntary agreement. Persuasion blends logic (logos), credibility (ethos), and emotional resonance (pathos) into a message that feels both compelling and trustworthy. For example, when introducing a new ergonomics program, a persuasive safety professional doesn't just deliver statistics—they tell the story behind the numbers, showing how these changes reduce injuries and improve quality of life. In doing so, they empower people to choose safety not out of obligation, but because it makes sense and aligns with shared values.

Influence, another dimension of this superpower, operates less visibly but no less powerfully. Built on a foundation of consistency, fairness, and demonstrated care, influence emerges through day-to-day interactions. It is the trust earned by showing up, listening, and modeling ethical behavior. A safety leader who quietly exemplifies best practices—who walks the talk—builds a culture in which others instinctively follow. Influence changes attitudes and behaviors not by command, but by example.

Sometimes, the superpower of communication must be used more assertively through leverage. Leverage is the strategic use of organizational resources, authority, or policy to achieve urgent or critical safety outcomes. This is not coercion—it is a responsible use of position to ensure necessary protections are put in place. A safety professional might invoke legal standards or executive directives to expedite the rollout of critical safety equipment, especially when lives are at risk. When used ethically, leverage reinforces credibility and demonstrates leadership under pressure.

However, like any powerful force, communication can be misused. Manipulation is the dark side of this superpower. It involves twisting facts, exploiting emotions, or concealing information to drive compliance. While it may achieve short-term goals, manipulation erodes trust, damages relationships, and undermines the safety culture. A manipulated workforce may comply today but disengage tomorrow, skeptical of future initiatives and hesitant to raise concerns. The safety professional's true power lies not in control, but in collaboration.

To wield communication ethically and effectively, safety professionals must remain anchored in transparency, integrity, and respect. Persuasion should be grounded in truth and shared interest. Influence should be earned through consistent behavior and relational trust. Leverage should be exercised with care, always aligned with the greater good. And manipulation must be avoided entirely, as it violates the very principles of trust and protection that define the profession.

When used with purpose and principle, communication becomes the OSH professional's most powerful tool—one that inspires, protects, and transforms. It



enables them to not only change policies and practices, but to shift mindsets and cultures. In a field where every decision can affect lives, communication isn't just a skill—it's a superpower that saves.

Logos, Ethos, Pathos Ethics Scenarios

Scenario 1 – The Bid at Any Cost (Injury Reclassification Pressure)

You are the Safety Manager for a mid-sized construction services company. The firm is competing for a **major petrochemical subcontract** that could secure its financial survival and provide jobs for hundreds of workers.

One of the client's prequalification criteria is a **low Total Recordable Incident Rate (TRIR)**. Recently, three incidents occurred:

- A laceration requiring stitches,
- A sprain treated with prescription medication,
- A mild concussion from a fall.

Per OSHA definitions, **all are recordable injuries**.

At the executive meeting, the COO says:

“If we classify these as recordables, our TRIR goes up, and we won't even be considered. Everyone else plays the game. Just call them 'first aid' or 'not work-related.' We need this contract to survive.”

The pressure is clear: jobs, finances, and reputation are at stake.

Decision Options

- A) Reclassify the cases as non-recordable to protect TRIR and secure the bid.
- B) Classify them truthfully under OSHA criteria, regardless of the impact.
- C) Refuse to falsify and propose a strategy to highlight your company's safety culture, corrective actions, and leading indicator metrics to offset the recordables in the bid package.
- D) Document the situation internally, classify truthfully, and if executives push for falsification, raise the concern with corporate leadership or counsel — but treat external reporting as a last resort.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Reclassify):**
 - **Unethical and illegal.** Misrepresentation of injury data is falsification.
 - **Violates: BCSP** (truthful reporting), **ASSP** (integrity, avoid actions harming the profession), **NSPE** (faithful agent but must not mislead).
 - **Ethical theory:** Fails **deontology** (lying is wrong regardless of outcome). Consequentialism also fails (long-term risk of being caught is severe).
- **B (Truthful classification):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Protects professional integrity and legal compliance.
 - **Aligns with: BGC** (honesty, integrity), **AIHA** (competence and truthful reporting).
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to truth), **virtue ethics** (courage, honesty).
- **C (Truth + strategy):**
 - **Practical and ethical.** Balances fidelity to employer with integrity. Emphasizes being a faithful agent by finding alternative ways to remain competitive without deception.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (balancing responsibility to workers, employer, and client), **virtue ethics** (prudence).
- **D (Document & escalate internally):**
 - **Last resort if pressure continues.** Maintains loyalty to employer while ensuring ethical practice.
 - **Whistleblowing** externally is not appropriate unless gross negligence or imminent danger is involved.
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (courage, accountability), **deontology** (truthful reporting).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Choose **B** (accurate classification).
- **Step 2:** Use **C** to help leadership see the competitive advantage of a strong safety culture, even with recordables.
- **Step 3:** If executive pressure persists, proceed to **D** — but keep external escalation as a **last resort**, consistent with the duty of loyalty to the employer.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance being a **faithful agent** to your employer with your duty to comply with professional ethics and legal obligations?
2. What strategies (beyond TRIR) could you present to a client to show your company's strong safety performance?
3. If you refused to reclassify, how would you communicate this decision to executives without appearing disloyal?
4. Under what circumstances (if any) would external reporting become ethically justified in this case?
5. How do **different ethical theories** (deontology, consequentialism, care ethics, virtue ethics) shape your decision-making here?

Scenario 2 – The Global Double Standard (Overseas PPE)

You are the Corporate Safety Manager for a multinational manufacturer that operates plants in the U.S., Europe, and Southeast Asia.

In the U.S. and Europe, workers are equipped with advanced PPE — flame-resistant coveralls, high-grade respirators, and impact-resistant eye protection. These meet both **OSHA** and **international best practices**.

However, at one of the company’s Southeast Asian plants, workers are issued only basic cotton uniforms, dust masks, and low-cost safety glasses. Management justifies this by saying:

“Local law doesn’t require more. If we give them U.S.-level PPE, costs will explode and we’ll lose our price advantage. This is how business is done here.”

You are pressured to approve this practice in your global safety compliance review.

Decision Options

- A) Approve the local standard as legally compliant, accepting reduced protection.
- B) Recommend upgrading PPE based on injury data and cost-benefit analysis, but leave the final call to local leadership.
- C) Require all sites to follow international best practice standards, regardless of local law, to ensure consistency and worker protection.
- D) If leadership refuses change, formally document your recommendation and raise the issue at the corporate board level — but avoid external escalation unless gross negligence is involved.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Approve local standard):**
 - **Weak.** While legally compliant, it knowingly exposes workers to higher risk.
 - **Violates: ICOH** (universal worker dignity), **BCRSP** (protect health above self-interest).
 - **Ethical theory: Relativism** (law/culture justifies weaker standards) — a weak ethical stance.
- **B (Recommend upgrades with data):**
 - **Moderately strong.** Uses financial and injury risk data to influence leaders. Shows fidelity to employer while advocating for safety.
 - **Ethical theory: Consequentialism** (reducing harm by showing cost savings).
- **C (Require best practice globally):**
 - **Strongest ethical stance.** Ensures fairness and equal protection across all sites.
 - **Aligns with: ASSP** (create safe, resilient workplaces), **BCSP** (competence and integrity).
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to protect regardless of cost), **virtue ethics** (justice, fairness).
- **D (Document & escalate internally):**
 - **Prudent if met with resistance.** Protects your professional credibility and ensures accountability is shared with leadership.
 - **Whistleblowing externally only if gross negligence/imminent danger exists.**
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (prudence, courage), **care ethics** (protecting vulnerable workers while balancing employer loyalty).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Advocate for **C** — global best practices across sites.
- **Step 2:** Use **B** to strengthen the case with cost-benefit data, showing loyalty to employer's business model while advancing safety.
- **Step 3:** If leadership resists, follow **D** — formally document your recommendation and escalate internally.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **legal compliance in one country** with **universal ethical obligations to workers**?
2. Would you argue that **all workers deserve the same protections**, or that context and local law should guide standards? Why?
3. How do different ethical theories apply?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to protect all workers equally.
 - **Consequentialism:** Improved PPE reduces injuries and costs long-term.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to vulnerable international workers.
 - **Relativism:** Following local law is “good enough.”
4. As a safety professional, how do you remain a **faithful agent to the employer** while still upholding ethical codes?
5. How would you explain this decision differently to **executives, plant managers, and the overseas workforce**?

Scenario 3 – The Deadline Dilemma (Confined Space Entry)

You are the Safety Manager for a large construction project involving multiple subcontractors. The project is already **behind schedule**, and the client has threatened significant **financial penalties** if milestones are not met.

A critical task requires workers to enter a **confined space** to complete welding and inspection work. According to procedure, the space must first be:

- Ventilated and tested for oxygen deficiency, flammable gases, and toxic vapors.
- Certified safe by a qualified entry supervisor.

However, testing has not been completed yet because the gas monitor is in use on another site.

Supervisors approach you and say:

“We can’t afford another delay. The workers have done this before without issues. Just let them go in — otherwise, we’ll miss the deadline, and everyone could lose their jobs.” The pressure is direct: risk safety compliance or jeopardize livelihoods.

Decision Options

- A) Permit the entry without testing to avoid financial losses.
- B) Refuse entry until testing and certification are complete, citing OSHA and company procedure.
- C) Refuse entry but immediately work with project management to propose alternative solutions (e.g., reschedule crews, adjust workflow) to demonstrate commitment to both safety and project goals.
- D) Document your refusal, classify the space as unsafe, and escalate internally if pressured further.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Permit entry):**
 - **Unethical and unsafe.** Direct violation of OSHA's confined space entry rules. Puts lives at risk.
 - **Violates: NSPE** (safety, health, and welfare paramount), **ASSP** (inform when risk of serious injury is unacceptable), **BCSP** (undertake assignments only when qualified/competent).
 - **Ethical theory:** Fails **deontology** (duty to follow life-protecting rules) and **consequentialism** (potential fatalities outweigh deadline penalties).
- **B (Refuse until tested):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Aligns with law, codes, and professional integrity.
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to enforce rules), **virtue ethics** (courage, integrity).
- **C (Refuse + propose alternatives):**
 - **Balanced and practical.** Maintains ethical standards while showing loyalty to employer's project goals. Protects worker safety and demonstrates value as a problem-solver.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (responsibility to workers and employer), **virtue ethics** (prudence).
- **D (Document & escalate):**
 - **Necessary if pressure continues.** Creates accountability trail and protects professional integrity. External escalation is not warranted here unless gross negligence/imminent danger persists.
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (accountability), **deontology** (documentation duty).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Choose **B** — enforce safe entry requirements.
- **Step 2:** Combine with **C** — offer constructive alternatives to keep project moving.
- **Step 3:** If supervisors continue to pressure unsafe entry, proceed to **D**.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **legal compliance and worker safety** with **employer loyalty and project deadlines**?
2. Would you explain your refusal differently to **workers fearing job loss** vs. **executives fearing penalties**?
3. How do ethical theories apply here?
 - **Deontology:** Rules must be followed — no entry until safe.
 - **Consequentialism:** Preventing fatalities outweighs financial risks.
 - **Care ethics:** Protects both workers' lives and jobs through compromise solutions.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Courage to stand firm, prudence in proposing alternatives.
4. How can a safety professional demonstrate being a **faithful agent to the employer** while refusing unsafe practices?

Scenario 4 – The Hidden Outbreak (Healthcare Whistleblower)

You are the Occupational Health & Safety Manager at a regional hospital. During a compliance review, you discover that a **supervisor has been altering infection control records** to make the hospital appear compliant with accreditation standards.

The falsified records hide multiple cases of **hospital-acquired infections (HAIs)** that should have been reported. Patients are still at risk of exposure, but the falsification helps the hospital avoid scrutiny and potential funding penalties.

When you raise the issue privately, the supervisor responds:

“Don’t make this a big deal. If this comes out, the hospital could lose accreditation, and staff could lose their jobs. Everyone benefits if you just leave it alone.”

You face an ethical dilemma: loyalty to employer and colleagues vs. duty to patients and public health.

Decision Options

- A) Stay silent to protect your career, the hospital’s reputation, and jobs.
- B) Collect evidence and report the falsification through internal compliance channels.
- C) If ignored internally, escalate the concern to corporate leadership or the hospital board — external reporting only as a last resort in cases of gross negligence.
- D) Confront the supervisor again and try to persuade them to self-correct the records.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Stay silent):**
 - **Unethical.** Fails duty to patients and public health.
 - **Violates: ACOEM** (health of patients must come first), **NSPE** (safety, health, and welfare of the public paramount).
 - **Ethical theory: Relativism/egoism** — prioritizing self-interest and loyalty over public duty.
- **B (Internal report):**
 - **Ethically strongest first step.** Fulfills responsibility while staying a faithful agent to the employer.
 - **Aligns with: AIHA** (reporting unethical practices within professional channels), **BCSP** (truthfulness and competence).
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to truth), **virtue ethics** (integrity, courage).
- **C (Escalate internally; external only as last resort):**
 - **Balanced.** Protects professional integrity while respecting loyalty to employer.
 - **External whistleblowing** only if the issue rises to gross negligence or imminent harm.
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (prudence, courage), **care ethics** (responsibility to patients and institution).
- **D (Persuade supervisor):**
 - **Partial step.** Shows care ethics and collegial loyalty but unlikely to correct systemic misconduct.
 - Risk: records may remain falsified, and patients remain at risk.

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Take **B** — report through internal compliance channels, backed by evidence.
- **Step 2:** If the concern is ignored or suppressed, follow **C** — escalate to higher hospital leadership.
- **Step 3:** Reserve **external reporting** only for gross negligence or imminent danger, consistent with professional duty and faithful agency.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you weigh **loyalty to employer and colleagues** against **duty to patients and public health**?
2. What professional codes best guide this decision, and how?
3. Which ethical theories apply most strongly here?
 - **Deontology:** Truth-telling and duty to protect patients.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Courage and integrity in addressing falsification.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to vulnerable patients while balancing loyalty.
 - **Relativism:** “Protect the hospital” mindset — why is this ethically weak?
4. How would you communicate your decision differently to **hospital leadership, frontline staff, and external regulators** if escalation became necessary?
5. How can a safety professional **maintain trust with leadership** while refusing to participate in falsification?

Scenario 5 – The Paper Sign-Off (Aviation Maintenance Pressure)

You are the Safety & Compliance Officer for a regional airline. Mechanics are responsible for performing scheduled aircraft inspections and documenting them in maintenance logs.

During a late-night shift, several mechanics privately tell you that they are being **pressured by supervisors to sign off inspections that were not actually performed** so that planes can be released for the morning flight schedule.

One mechanic admits:

“If we do every inspection by the book, planes will be delayed, flights will be canceled, and management will come down hard on us. Everyone else signs them off anyway. If we don’t, jobs could be on the line.”

You realize that this practice could compromise passenger safety, the airline’s certification, and your own professional credibility.

Decision Options

- A) Allow the practice, justifying it as an industry norm and necessary for efficiency.
- B) Refuse to approve or sign off falsified inspections and document your concerns.
- C) Recommend operational changes (e.g., adjusting schedules, staffing, or maintenance turnaround times) that reduce pressure while maintaining compliance.
- D) If pressured further, escalate internally to higher airline leadership, making it clear that external reporting would only be a last resort if systemic negligence persists.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Allow falsification):**
 - **Unethical and illegal.** Direct falsification of maintenance records.
 - **Violates: BCSP** (truthful representation of qualifications/work), **ASSP** (avoid behavior that harms profession's reputation), **BGC** (integrity and honesty).
 - **Ethical theory:** Fails **deontology** (lying is wrong), and **consequentialism** (potential catastrophic accidents outweigh short-term flight delays).
- **B (Refuse falsification):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Protects public safety, professional integrity, and compliance.
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to truth), **virtue ethics** (courage, integrity).
- **C (Operational fixes):**
 - **Balanced approach.** Addresses the root cause (unrealistic schedules) while protecting safety and employer loyalty.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (balancing responsibility to workers, employer, and passengers), **virtue ethics** (prudence).
- **D (Escalate internally):**
 - **Necessary if B and C fail.** Protects integrity while giving leadership a chance to resolve issues.
 - **External whistleblowing** would be justified only in the case of gross negligence or imminent risk to passenger lives.
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (accountability, courage).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Take **B** — refuse to sign off falsified inspections and document your refusal.
- **Step 2:** Use **C** — propose operational solutions to relieve pressure.
- **Step 3:** If systemic pressure continues, follow **D** — escalate internally to leadership. External escalation only as last resort in gross negligence scenarios.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **employer loyalty** with the **duty to passenger safety**?
2. What professional codes of ethics are most relevant here, and how would you apply them?
3. Which ethical theories apply most strongly in this scenario?
 - **Deontology:** Inspections must be reported truthfully.
 - **Consequentialism:** Passenger lives outweigh delayed flights.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Integrity and courage in refusing to compromise safety.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to both mechanics under pressure and passengers at risk.
4. How could you present **operational improvement solutions** (Option C) to management so you are seen as a partner, not just an obstacle?
5. At what point does this issue rise to **gross negligence** requiring whistleblowing beyond internal escalation?

Scenario 6 – The Hidden Spill (Environmental Consulting Pressure)

You are an Environmental Health & Safety Consultant working for a mid-sized chemical processing client. During a routine site visit, you discover that a **storage tank valve leaked solvent into the soil** near a drainage ditch that leads to a creek.

By law, the spill is **reportable to environmental authorities** because it exceeds the threshold quantity and has potential offsite impact.

When you raise this, the client's Plant Manager pulls you aside and says:

“We've already contained it and will clean it up by tomorrow. There's no need to file a report. If the regulators find out, we'll get fines and it could hurt our operating license. Just keep this between us — everyone wins if you don't make it official.”

You recognize this as a test of your integrity, professional responsibility, and loyalty to your client.

Decision Options

- A) Agree not to report since the spill has been contained and cleanup is planned.
- B) Document the incident truthfully and advise the client of their legal duty to report, even if it results in penalties.
- C) Refuse to falsify records but work with the client to mitigate penalties by highlighting corrective actions, prevention measures, and voluntary transparency.
- D) If pressured to conceal, document your professional recommendation and escalate internally (corporate counsel or senior leadership). External reporting should be reserved for gross negligence or imminent environmental/public health risk.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Agree to conceal):**
 - **Unethical and illegal.** Knowingly hiding a reportable spill.
 - **Violates: BGC** (protect environment and public health), **ICOH** (responsibility to protect the community), **ASSP** (integrity and accountability).
 - **Ethical theory:** Fails **deontology** (duty to truth/law) and **consequentialism** (risk of long-term environmental damage and liability).
- **B (Report truthfully):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Upholds legal compliance and professional duty.
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to follow law), **virtue ethics** (integrity, honesty).
- **C (Report + mitigate):**
 - **Practical and balanced.** Preserves client relationship while ensuring compliance. Positions transparency as a long-term business strength.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (responsibility to both community and client), **virtue ethics** (prudence, justice).
- **D (Escalate internally if pressured):**
 - **Protects your credibility.** Ensures accountability is shifted to higher decision-makers.
 - **External escalation** is reserved only for **gross negligence or imminent harm** (e.g., if spill threatens drinking water and management refuses to act).
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (courage), **care ethics** (protecting public and environment while being a faithful agent).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Choose **B** — document and report truthfully.
- **Step 2:** Use **C** to help the client frame corrective actions positively to regulators.
- **Step 3:** If pressured to conceal, follow **D** — escalate internally. External reporting only if gross negligence or imminent danger is present.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **client loyalty** with **legal duty to report environmental hazards**?
2. How might you present **Option C** to show the client that transparency can protect long-term business credibility?
3. Which ethical theories apply most strongly here?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to comply with environmental reporting law.
 - **Consequentialism:** Concealment risks worse outcomes (fines, lawsuits, reputational damage).
 - **Virtue ethics:** Integrity and honesty in documentation.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to community and client simultaneously.
 - **Relativism:** “Local practice” of concealment — why is this ethically weak?
4. What strategies could you use to maintain your **professional relationship with the client** while refusing to participate in concealment?
5. When does failure to report a spill rise to the level of **gross negligence**?

Scenario 7 – The Surveillance Debate (AI Worker Monitoring)

Your company has recently implemented an **AI-driven monitoring system** across several facilities. The system uses cameras, sensors, and wearable trackers to monitor whether employees are consistently wearing PPE, following safe work practices, and complying with movement restrictions in hazardous zones.

Management promotes the program as a **safety breakthrough** — it reduces incident rates, collects data for predictive analytics, and promises efficiency gains.

However, employees have started to complain. They say the system:

- Feels invasive and makes them feel constantly “watched.”
- Collects more personal data than necessary (movement, biometrics).
- Is being used by supervisors for **disciplinary actions**, not just safety improvement.

Several union representatives approach you and say:

“This system violates worker dignity and trust. If you don’t act, we’ll escalate this to regulators and the press.”

You are tasked with advising leadership on whether the program should continue as designed, be modified, or suspended.

Decision Options

A) Fully support the monitoring program as-is, emphasizing its safety benefits and efficiency gains.

B) Gather employee feedback and work with management to redesign the system so it protects both safety and privacy.

C) Recommend pausing rollout until a formal ethical review and privacy impact assessment are completed.

D) If management insists on continuing without changes, formally document your concerns and escalate to corporate leadership — keeping external escalation as a last resort reserved for gross negligence (e.g., clear violation of data protection laws).

Analysis of Options

- **A (Support as-is):**
 - **Weak.** Ignores valid privacy and dignity concerns. May create mistrust and resistance, undermining safety culture.
 - **Violates: ASSP** (respect for worker dignity and fairness), **ICOH** (protecting worker rights).
 - **Ethical theory:** Narrow **consequentialism** (focus only on safety outcomes, ignoring broader harms).
- **B (Redesign with feedback):**

- **Strong.** Shows responsiveness to employees while supporting company's safety goals.
- **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (respecting workers' dignity), **virtue ethics** (prudence, fairness).
- **C (Pause for review):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Balances safety improvement with accountability, privacy, and trust.
 - **Aligns with: BCSP** (competence, responsibility in implementing technology).
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to respect worker rights), **virtue ethics** (prudence, justice).
- **D (Escalate internally if ignored):**
 - **Protects your professional integrity.** Ensures accountability rests with leadership.
 - **External escalation** should only occur if there is gross negligence (e.g., illegal surveillance or data misuse).
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (courage), **care ethics** (balancing employer and worker interests).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Recommend **C** — pause rollout for ethical and privacy review.
- **Step 2:** Implement **B** — engage employees and redesign the system collaboratively.
- **Step 3:** If leadership insists on proceeding without changes, follow **D** — escalate internally while reserving external escalation for gross negligence scenarios.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **innovation and safety benefits** with **worker privacy and dignity**?
2. What ethical risks arise when **safety tools are repurposed for discipline**?
3. Which ethical theories are most relevant?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to respect privacy and human dignity.

- **Consequentialism:** Benefits vs. harms of monitoring.
 - **Care ethics:** Building trust and fairness in workplace relationships.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Prudence and justice in balancing competing interests.
4. How would you present your recommendation differently to **executives, union representatives, and frontline workers**?
 5. Under what conditions would external escalation (whistleblowing) become justified in such a case?

Scenario 8 – The Subcontractor Blind Spot (Construction Fall Protection)

You are the Safety Manager on a large commercial construction project. The general contractor (your employer) has hired multiple subcontractors to complete specialized tasks.

During a site walk, you observe a team of subcontractor workers performing steel work at a height of 25 feet with **no fall protection** — no harnesses, no guardrails, no nets. You immediately raise the concern to the prime contractor’s superintendent, who responds:

“They’re not our employees. Don’t interfere. If we start calling them out, the subcontractor will slow down or walk off the job. We’ll be the ones stuck with delays and penalties. It’s their problem, not ours.”

The workers remain at risk of a fatal fall. You must decide whether to intervene, report, or stay silent.

Decision Options

- A) Do nothing — the workers are subcontractor employees and not your direct responsibility.
- B) Document and report the hazard internally to project leadership, but take no direct action.
- C) Stop the unsafe work immediately and require the subcontractor to provide fall protection before resuming.
- D) If project leadership refuses corrective action, formally document your professional concerns and escalate to higher corporate management — keeping external escalation as a last resort for gross negligence or imminent risk.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Do nothing):**
 - **Unethical.** Fails duty to protect life. Accepting unsafe practices erodes safety culture.
 - **Violates: NSPE** (safety of public paramount), **BCRSP** (protection of worker health above self-interest), **ASSP** (act to prevent unacceptable risk).
 - **Ethical theory: Relativism** (“not my employees, not my problem”) — a weak ethical stance.
- **B (Report internally only):**
 - **Partial compliance.** Protects professional record but delays intervention, leaving workers exposed.
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (documentation duty), but incomplete because it avoids immediate protection.
- **C (Stop work immediately):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Protects workers from imminent danger, consistent with duty to prevent harm.
 - **Aligns with: BCSP** (act within competence to prevent unsafe practice), **BGC** (public safety protection).
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to stop unsafe practices), **virtue ethics** (courage, integrity), **care ethics** (responsibility to vulnerable workers).
- **D (Escalate internally if resisted):**
 - **Necessary if C is blocked.** Maintains professional credibility and ensures accountability is documented.
 - **External escalation** is reserved for **gross negligence or imminent life-threatening danger with no corrective action.**
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (accountability), **care ethics** (balancing employer loyalty with worker protection).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Take **C** — stop unsafe work immediately and require fall protection.
- **Step 2:** Follow with **B** — document and report hazard internally.
- **Step 3:** If project leadership resists, use **D** — escalate to corporate leadership. External escalation only as a last resort for gross negligence/imminent harm.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance your responsibility to **non-employee workers** with your role as a faithful agent to your employer?
2. What risks do you face if you intervene directly — and what risks do you face if you do nothing?
3. Which ethical theories apply most strongly?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to stop unsafe work regardless of employer relationship.
 - **Consequentialism:** Preventing fatalities outweighs risk of delays.
 - **Care ethics:** Protects subcontractor workers as human beings, not just employees.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Courage to intervene in a difficult situation.
4. How would you explain your decision differently to **subcontractor leadership, general contractor executives, and workers on site**?
5. At what point does failure to act on subcontractor hazards become **gross negligence**?

Scenario 9 – The PPE Shortage (Healthcare Allocation Dilemma)

You are the Safety Officer at a major hospital during a pandemic. Global supply chains have broken down, and PPE deliveries are severely limited.

The hospital has **one week's worth of N95 respirators** in stock. Requests for PPE are coming from:

- **ER nurses and physicians**, who treat the highest volume of suspected and confirmed infectious patients.
- **ICU staff**, who manage intubated patients with high aerosol risks.
- **Administrative staff**, who also interact with patients but at lower risk.
- **General support staff** (cleaning, food service, security), who argue they are equally exposed in patient areas.

Leadership looks to you for a recommendation. Whatever you decide will impact worker safety, morale, and the hospital's ability to function.

Decision Options

- A) Distribute PPE equally among all staff groups, regardless of exposure level.
- B) Prioritize PPE for frontline clinical staff (ER and ICU), where exposure risk is highest.
- C) Rotate PPE supplies among departments weekly to give all staff "some" protection.
- D) Develop a risk-based allocation strategy (prioritizing high exposure areas) while communicating transparently to maintain fairness and morale.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Equal distribution):**
 - **Superficially fair, but ethically weak.** Fails to account for different levels of exposure risk. Could result in more infections among frontline staff.
 - **Violates: ACOEM** (health of patients and providers must come first).
 - **Ethical theory: Relativism** (treating unequal situations as if equal).
- **B (Prioritize ER/ICU):**
 - **Strong.** Protects those at greatest risk and ensures continuity of care.
 - **Aligns with: ICOH** (duty to protect workers in greatest danger), **NSPE** (public health and safety paramount).
 - **Ethical theory: Consequentialism** (maximizing benefit, minimizing harm), **justice (distributive)**.
- **C (Rotate supplies):**
 - **Weak.** Creates illusion of fairness but ultimately leaves high-risk staff dangerously under-protected during critical exposures.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** intent (sharing burden), but practically flawed.
- **D (Risk-based allocation + transparency):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Balances protection for the most exposed while maintaining trust with all staff by explaining rationale.
 - **Aligns with: BCRSP** (protection of health over self-interest), **ASSP** (integrity, accountability, fairness).
 - **Ethical theory: Virtue ethics** (prudence, justice), **care ethics** (empathy for all staff, fairness in communication).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Recommend **D** — a risk-based allocation strategy that prioritizes high-risk staff while communicating openly with all groups.
- **Step 2:** Use **B** as the basis for risk prioritization (ER/ICU first).
- **Step 3:** Continue working with supply chain and leadership to secure more PPE and explore reuse/extended-use protocols.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **fairness** with **risk-based allocation** when distributing scarce safety resources?
2. What risks (ethical and practical) could result from **equal distribution** versus **prioritization**?
3. Which ethical theories apply most strongly here?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to protect those in greatest danger.
 - **Consequentialism:** Saving the greatest number of lives by protecting those most exposed.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Prudence, fairness, and justice in resource allocation.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to protect all staff while recognizing vulnerability.
 - **Relativism:** “Everyone gets the same” approach — why it fails.
4. How can **transparent communication** maintain morale even when some groups receive less PPE?
5. At what point does failure to allocate PPE ethically rise to **gross negligence**?

Scenario 10 – The Green Dilemma (Climate vs. Profit Priorities)

You are the Corporate Safety, Health, and Environmental Director at a large energy company.

The executive team is debating two competing investment options:

1. Project A – Short-Term High Profit:

- A new petrochemical expansion that will deliver record profits in the next three years.
- However, it carries **high greenhouse gas emissions** and would be a visible target for environmental activists.
- Regulators have approved it, but only under minimal compliance standards.

2. Project B – Long-Term Sustainability:

- A renewable energy infrastructure investment with **much lower emissions**.
- Requires a **larger upfront investment** and will not deliver returns for 8–10 years.
- Positions the company as a climate leader but may reduce short-term shareholder value.

At the board meeting, a senior VP says:

“Our duty is to shareholders. If we pass up Project A, we leave billions on the table. That’s not responsible business. Besides, we’re still legally compliant.”

You are asked to provide your professional recommendation.

Decision Options

- A) Recommend Project A, citing profitability and legal compliance as sufficient justification.
- B) Recommend Project B, prioritizing sustainability and long-term environmental stewardship.
- C) Recommend a hybrid strategy: pursue Project A while gradually phasing in green initiatives.
- D) Present both options but highlight risk data (reputational, regulatory, climate-related) showing why Project B is the more responsible long-term choice.

Analysis of Options

- **A (Project A – Profit-first):**
 - **Weak.** While legally compliant, it prioritizes short-term profit over environmental stewardship and public health.
 - **Violates: BGC** (protect the environment and public welfare), **ASSP** (advance sustainability in professional practice), **NSPE** (paramount duty to public health, safety, and welfare).
 - **Ethical theory: Relativism** (law is enough) and **egoism** (shareholder profit only) — ethically weak.
- **B (Project B – Sustainability-first):**
 - **Ethically strongest.** Demonstrates responsibility to future generations, communities, and long-term company resilience.
 - **Ethical theory: Deontology** (duty to protect environment), **virtue ethics** (prudence, stewardship, justice).
- **C (Hybrid strategy):**
 - **Moderately strong but conflicted.** May look balanced but risks being seen as “greenwashing” if Project A dominates.
 - **Ethical theory: Care ethics** (attempting to satisfy both shareholders and society), but weaker in practice.
- **D (Present both, but highlight long-term risks of A):**
 - **Practical and strategic.** Provides leadership with choice but makes a strong case for sustainability using business risk arguments.
 - **Aligns with: BCRSP** (protection of worker and community health above self-interest), **AIHA** (duty to advance sustainable practices).

- **Ethical theory: Consequentialism** (long-term harm reduction), **virtue ethics** (prudence, foresight).

Best Practice Path

- **Step 1:** Recommend **B** — sustainability-first.
- **Step 2:** Use **D** as the framing — present both options but highlight regulatory, reputational, and long-term risk data to make the sustainability case compelling to executives.
- **Step 3:** If board insists on Project A, advocate for **strong mitigation and offset strategies** to reduce harm.

Reflection Prompts

1. How do you balance **shareholder obligations** with **public health, safety, and environmental duty**?
2. Which ethical theories are most relevant here?
 - **Deontology:** Duty to protect the environment and future generations.
 - **Consequentialism:** Long-term societal and business risks of high emissions.
 - **Virtue ethics:** Prudence, stewardship, foresight.
 - **Care ethics:** Responsibility to both shareholders and communities.
 - **Relativism:** “It’s legal, therefore it’s fine” — why is this weak?
3. How would you communicate your recommendation differently to:
 - **The Board of Directors (shareholders focus)**
 - **Employees (job security focus)**
 - **Community stakeholders (environmental justice focus)**
4. At what point does pursuing profit-first projects cross into **gross negligence** for safety professionals?
5. How can safety professionals act as **faithful agents to employers** while advocating for sustainability?

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