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# INCOSE

# CODE OF ETHICS

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## Purpose

This Code establishes ethical standards that guide the professional conduct of INCOSE (International Council of Systems Engineers) members. It reflects enduring principles of integrity, responsibility, and public service, applied to the complex, interconnected systems that shape today's world. Because ethical dilemmas often involve competing values, this Code emphasizes principled judgment over rigid rules. When conflicts arise, members are expected to thoughtfully evaluate decisions using sound ethical reasoning, professional standards, and the broader societal impact of their actions.

## Introduction

Systems engineering is a profession grounded in expertise and service to society, bridging disciplines, technologies, organizations, and life-cycle phases. In essence, systems engineers:

- Represents diverse stakeholder interests
- Operates across cultural, national, and regulatory boundaries
- Influences complex socio-technical systems with long-term consequences

As a widely recognized organization, INCOSE members help shape infrastructure, digital ecosystems, defense systems, transportation networks, healthcare technologies, climate solutions, and emerging AI-enabled systems. These systems can generate immense societal benefit, but may also introduce systemic risk, inequity, environmental harm, or unintended consequences if not responsibly designed.

# Core Ethical Principles

INCOSE members uphold and advance the integrity, honor, and dignity of the profession through:

## 1. Integrity and Honesty

- Acting truthfully, transparently, and objectively
- Avoiding deception, misrepresentation, or omission of material facts
- Maintaining independence of professional judgment

## 2. Competence and Lifelong Learning

- Maintaining and continually advancing technical, systems, and ethical knowledge
- Engaging in ongoing professional development
- Recognizing the limits of one's expertise and seeking qualified support when needed

## 3. Professional Excellence

- Striving to elevate the standards, credibility, and impact of the engineering profession
- Mentoring and developing future systems engineers
- Supporting professional societies, educational institutions, and collaborative communities

## 4. Accountability

- Accepting responsibility for decisions, analyses, and outcomes
- Being open to ethical review, peer scrutiny, and corrective action
- Promptly addressing errors, risks, or unintended consequences

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# Professional Conduct

As a valued member of INCOSE, it is vital that you:

## 1. Act Lawfully and Responsibly

- Comply with applicable laws, regulations, and professional standards
- Uphold international norms where operating across jurisdictions

## 2. Honor Commitments

- Fulfill contractual and professional obligations in good faith
- Deliver services competently and diligently

## 3. Avoid Conflicts of Interest

- Disclose real or perceived conflicts
- Avoid situations that compromise objectivity
- Refrain from using professional position for improper personal gain

## 4. Protect Intellectual and Confidential Information

- Respect intellectual property rights
- Safeguard proprietary, classified, and sensitive information

- Use data ethically and responsibly

**5. Treat All Stakeholders and Members with Respect**

- Foster inclusive, equitable, and respectful professional environments
- Engage diverse perspectives
- Avoid discrimination, harassment, or bias

**6. Provide Objective and Practical Advice**

- Base recommendations on sound analysis and evidence
  - Communicate risks, limitations, and uncertainties clearly
  - Avoid undue influence from financial, political, or organizational pressure
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## Ethical Decision-Making

When ethical conflicts arise, members should:

1. Revisit fundamental principles
  2. Consider long-term systemic impact
  3. Seek peer or professional guidance
  4. Document rationale and decision processes
  5. Prioritize public welfare above employer, client, or personal interest
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## Commitment

By joining INCOSE, members commit to advancing systems that are safe, sustainable, resilient, equitable, and beneficial to society. The trust placed in our members is significant. With that trust comes responsibility.