

## **CODE OF ETHICS**

### **THE BRITISH OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE SOCIETY FACULTY OF OCCUPATIONAL HYGIENE**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 One of the objects of the Society is the promotion of good practice in occupational hygiene (Memorandum of Association, 3). Council has delegated to the Faculty Board the powers to produce a Code of Ethics for the profession of occupational hygiene, and to make rules for the members of the Faculty (Articles of Association, 27b). The Code of Ethics will be enforced under item 53 of the Articles of Association.
- 1.2 The primary aim of this Code is to ensure that at all times members of the Faculty act in such a way that the protection and preservation of worker health is their paramount responsibility. The Code therefore protects the individual member who could be in a vulnerable position. Council and the Faculty Board consider that the profession requires standards of conduct which are as rigorous as those that are required in other professions such as medicine and law, since the consequences of lapses may be equally serious. They also consider that the justifiable confidence of the public and others in those who are members of the Faculty is a vital element in the recognition of occupational hygiene, and the further development of its application, and hence the protection and preservation of worker health.
- 1.3 This Code is designed to guide members who may be subjected to contradictory pressures and enable them to act with integrity and objectivity in spite of those pressures.
- 1.4 Another function of this Code is to provide a benchmark for clients, employers, other professionals and members of the general public to use where there is a question as to whether Faculty members have conducted themselves in an appropriate manner. In more serious cases it will provide grounds for reference to the Faculty Board for action. Following due process the Faculty Board will make recommendations to Council, which has the power to warn, admonish, reprimand, suspend or expel a member from the Society (Articles of Association 53).
- 1.5 This Code is mandatory and directly applicable to all Faculty members irrespective of grade of membership. In any application of paragraph 1.4, the Faculty Board will take into account the grade of membership.
- 1.6 The following sections provide standards for the ethical conduct of occupational hygienists as they practice their profession. The primary professional purpose is to contribute positively to the management of the prevention or reduction of risks to health arising from work activities. These risks may be from chemical, biological and/or physical agents. Occupational hygienists may be employed by a variety of organisations and individuals, but there are common principles of conduct with which the Society expects them to comply. The Society reserves the right to warn, admonish, reprimand, suspend or expel any Faculty member who, after due process, has been found to have failed to maintain the professional standards of this Code.

## **2. General Integrity of Behaviour**

Faculty members shall act responsibly to uphold the integrity and dignity of the profession by:-

- 2.1 Ensuring that at all times their primary responsibility is to the worker whose health may be at risk.
- 2.2 Avoiding any conduct likely to discredit the profession or deceive the public.
- 2.3 Ensuring that decisions made in relation to professional activities are not influenced inappropriately by any considerations of the race, colour, creed, age, disability, sexuality or gender of those with whom they have dealings.
- 2.4 Not using statements in advertising their expertise or services which contain material misrepresentative of fact, or which omit material facts necessary to keep statements from being misleading about expertise or services.
- 2.5 Not permitting their employees, employers or others to misrepresent the professional backgrounds of individuals, as far as they are able to prevent this.
- 2.6 Ensuring that they give informative and accurate references in relation to the work and abilities of staff whom they manage.
- 2.7 Recognising and respecting the worthiness of other professionals.
- 2.8 Not maliciously or recklessly injuring or attempting to injure the professional reputation of another Faculty member; this specifically includes the misuse of the Code of Ethics itself by unjustifiable, malicious or reckless complaints, whether directly or through a third party.
- 2.9 Complying with any specific direction made by the Faculty Board in relation to minimum standards of professional ethics.

## **3. Professional Opinions etc.**

Faculty members shall practice their profession with integrity following recognised scientific and technical principles by:-

- 3.1 Basing opinions, judgements, interpretations of findings and recommendations on such principles and practices.
- 3.2 Not distorting, altering or hiding facts that may have a bearing on those judgements, etc.
- 3.3 Not knowingly making statements that misrepresent or omit significant facts that relate to opinions, etc, given.
- 3.4 Making clear the distinction between accepted facts and informed opinion.
- 3.5 Obtaining information regarding risks to health and safety from reliable sources.

#### **4. Competence**

Faculty members shall perform services only in the areas of their competence by:-

- 4.1 Not undertaking work unless qualified by education, training or experience in the specific technical fields involved, unless sufficient assistance is provided by associates, consultants or employees, and its use is made clear to the relevant clients.
- 4.2 Not addressing issues of public concern unless they confine themselves strictly to matters on which they can speak with authority.
- 4.3 Making themselves reasonably aware of developments in any relevant fields.

#### **5. Confidentiality**

- 5.1 Faculty members shall take all reasonable care to maintain the confidentiality of personal, managerial, technical, commercial or security information obtained as a result of the exercise of their professional occupational hygiene functions. Such information remains in the ownership of the relevant managers, employers, clients, authorities, etc and may not be used or released by members unless authorised to do so by the appropriate information owner.
- 5.2 Where information obtained as a result of the exercise of professional occupational hygiene functions relates directly to the health and safety of individuals, the same requirement specified in 5.1 applies, but members shall endeavour to ensure that such information is communicated to the individuals concerned by working through the information owners.
- 5.3 Without prejudice to the need to recognise the duty of confidentiality to the information owner, where this duty is breached by the Faculty member in the reasonable belief that this is necessary to protect the workforce from imminent and serious risks to health and safety, this shall be a defence under this Code of Ethics.
- 5.4 Where there is a legal requirement regarding release of the information, this will override any requirements of 5.1 to 5.3.

#### **6. Conflicts of Interest**

Faculty members shall avoid circumstances where a compromise of professional judgement, or a conflict of interest, might arise by:-

- 6.1 Disclosing known or potential conflicts of interest promptly to parties who may be affected.
- 6.2 Not soliciting or accepting financial or other valuable consideration from any party directly or indirectly which is liable to influence professional judgement.
- 6.3 Not offering any substantial gift, hospitality or other valuable consideration in order to secure work.
- 6.4 Advising clients or employers when they initially believe a project to improve health and safety is unlikely to be successful.
- 6.5 Not accepting work that is likely to damage the ability to fulfil existing commitments to occupational hygiene.
- 6.6 Taking as primary consideration the health and safety of parties, where they are subject to other professional codes which appear to conflict with this Code of Ethics.