

Examining the Code of Ethics

The public's safety and well-being rely on the integrity and high standards of certified personnel

BY LYNDSEY DECKARD

This column is intended to be a forum for discussing the workings of the Examination Bank Subcommittee of the American Welding Society Certification Committee. We solicit your questions and comments about certification, examination questions, challenges, protocol, or other related certification subjects. They can be mailed to AWS, 550 NW LeJeune Rd., Miami, FL 33126, or e-mailed to mjohnsen@aws.org.

If we have the necessary qualifications and perform our professional responsibilities with integrity, there is not much more a client or employer can ask.

As chair of the AWS Ethics Subcommittee, which falls under the umbrella of the Certification Committee, I participate in reviewing all alleged violations of the Code of Ethics and in recommend actions. I believe it is in the best interest of the Society and the readers of this magazine if we use the next few issues of this column to review and better understand the American Welding Society Code of Ethics. Therefore, I want to review some of the responsibilities certified personnel owe to the public.

The Code of Ethics for American Welding Society certified personnel is included in the required body of knowledge for all levels of AWS welding inspector certification. I do not think I am giving away any secrets when I tell you questions involving the Code of Ethics are typically found on the Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) and Senior Certified Welding Inspector (SCWI) examinations.

The Code of Ethics can be found in Section 8 of QC1, *Standard for AWS Certification of Welding Inspectors*. The opening paragraph states the purpose, goals, and, in the event of confirmed violations, a general description of possible sanctions for certified inspectors participating in unauthorized practices.

Paragraph 8.1, titled "Integrity," states the Certified Associate Welding Inspector (CAWI), CWI, or SCWI "shall act with complete integrity in professional matters."

My dictionary defines integrity as, "strict adherence to a code of moral values, artistic principles, or other standards;

complete sincerity or honesty." BINGO! If we have the necessary qualifications and perform our professional responsibilities with integrity, there is not much more a client or employer can ask.

Paragraph 8.2, "Responsibility to the Public," requires the certified person to act in a manner that will "preserve the health and well-being of the public." This shall be done by performing their required duties conscientiously and impartially to the fullest extent of his/her moral and civic responsibility and qualification. Among the requirements are that SCWIs, CWIs, and CAWIs shall

- Always present credentials upon request.
- Neither misrepresent their level of certification nor the current status of that certification. They shall not alter or otherwise falsify certification documents, nor give false verbal or written testimony of current certification status.

Certified personnel also have a responsibility to the public to "be completely objective, thorough, and factual in any written reports." This shall include all relevant or pertinent testimony in their reports and communications.

The inspector is also required to sign only for work that he/she has inspected or over which he/she has had direct supervision.

Finally, the CWI's responsibility to the public requires him/her to "neither associate with nor knowingly participate in a fraudulent or dishonest venture."

We have enumerated several general and specific "thou shalls" and "thou shall nots." These are all examples of actions that demonstrate integrity. Because AWS certification is one of the credentials with which we make our living, it is incumbent upon each of us to report violations of the Code of Ethics as well as any unauthorized practices of which we become aware. The failure of one CWI to maintain his/her integrity reflects poorly upon all CWIs. While "one bad apple," in this case, does not "spoil the barrel," it certainly makes all the other apples suspect.

We have all worked hard for our certifications and must not allow a few errant individuals to compromise and denigrate this validation of our accomplishments. ❖

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