



## **Northwest Environmental Business Council Principles of Professional Responsibility**

### **Statement from the NEBC Board:**

We adopt these Principles to announce to our clients, our member companies, our colleagues and the public those Principles that we believe should exemplify the service we provide. We hope that by setting forth these Principles, we assist each of our member companies in communicating the high standards of service, integrity and ethical obligations to which we believe each environmental professional should aspire. We hope this will encourage our members in furtherance of this goal. We adopt these Principles also so that our clients will recognize that each member company has committed resources to train its employees toward reaching these high standards.

Our goal is to continuously improve the services we provide to our clients and instill trust in clients, colleagues and the public. Because excellence in service necessarily conveys response to feedback, we hope you will suggest further improvements to us as you review these Principles.

### **I. OBLIGATIONS TO CLIENTS**

- A. STANDARD OF SERVICE
- B. TRUST AND CONFIDENTIALITY
- C. ADDRESSING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

### **II. OBLIGATIONS TO COLLEAGUES AND OTHER COMPANIES**

### **III. OBLIGATIONS TO THE PUBLIC**

#### **I. Obligations to Clients**

- A. Standard of Service  
Each member company and employee shall uphold the trust placed in you by your client to:
  - 1. Practice with professional and fiscal responsibility, and perform services in a timely manner.
  - 2. Recognize and make good use of the client's internal resources and knowledge.
  - 3. Advise a client to engage and cooperate with other experts and specialists whenever this would best serve the client's interests.
  - 4. Provide professional advice only on those subjects in which you are informed and qualified through professional training and experience; avoid misrepresenting your professional credentials or making misleading claims about your capabilities.

5. Before providing requested services, reach a mutual understanding with your client regarding level of effort, the purpose for which the client is retaining you, and the tasks to be performed.
6. Implement each of these Principles of Professional Responsibility in regular training programs for environmental professionals and other employees, and provide service excellence consistent with these Principles.

B. Trust and Confidentiality

1. Every member shall treat as confidential whatever the client designates confidential, including knowledge of the business affairs or technical processes of clients, except the member may disclose such confidences:
  - a. for which the client consents in writing;
  - b. that are impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation, or
  - c. that the member reasonably believes necessary;
2. to prevent the client from committing a crime;
3. to prevent a threat of undisclosed harm to human health or the environment that is both substantial and urgent; or
4. to defend itself in a controversy between the member and the client, to defend a criminal charge or civil claim against the member based upon conduct in which the client was involved, to respond to allegations in a third-party proceeding concerning the member's work for the clients, or pursuant to court order.
5. Should a conflict develop between these exceptions and any such requested confidentiality, the member shall notify its client of the conflict, and may resign from the engagement with reasonable notice if a reasonable accommodation of such competing concerns cannot be reached. The duty of confidentiality continues notwithstanding termination of the engagement.

C. Addressing Conflicts of Interest

Each member shall:

1. As soon as is reasonably practical upon learning of a conflict of interest, disclose the material facts to his client in writing and receive authorization to proceed. This applies to all conflicts of interest, including but not limited to the following:
  - a. if the engagement for a prospective or current client may be materially limited by the member's responsibilities to another current client; and
  - b. if the member has any business connections, interests, investments or affiliations that might influence the member's judgment or impair the objectivity of his or her services.
2. Disclose to any affected client the potential for the appearance of conflict when the member learns that his or her company has prepared a written or public position that reasonably appears contrary to a position on a particular subject sought by that client.

## **II. Obligations to Colleagues and Other Companies**

Each member shall:

- A. Interact with integrity and courtesy toward all colleagues. This includes the performance of work in a spirit of fairness toward clients, colleagues and other companies, and fidelity to employers.
- B. Share professional knowledge with others, and cooperate in advancing the environmental profession by the exchange of general information and experience with colleagues and other companies where client confidentiality is not impaired; and by contributing to the work of professional associations, educational institutions and technical journals.
- C. Set a professional example for all colleagues. You should give credit to others for their work, and avoid plagiarism. You should not attempt to disparage the professional reputation, prospects or business of a colleague or other company.
- D. Continue to upgrade their professional capabilities through education and participation in training programs.

## **III. Obligations to the Public**

- A. Members should promote public awareness of environmental processes on the quality of life and the environment. Members should be willing to apply their special knowledge, skill and training on the public behalf for the benefit of the environment.
- B. Members should consider the health and ecological consequences of all their work. If a member becomes aware of conditions or proposed actions of a client that present a threat of substantial undisclosed harm to human health or the environment, the member shall advise his employer and the client of such threats. Members shall attempt to provide a client with options to the contemplated course of action. Should a conflict develop between concern for the kind of risk noted above and the member's duty of client confidentiality or the member's willingness to continue the engagement, the member shall notify the client of the conflict, and may resign from engagement with reasonable notice if a reasonable accommodation of such competing concerns cannot be reached. If the member believes that an undisclosed threat to health or the environment is both substantial and urgent, the member may disclose the factual basis for concern to the appropriate governmental agency. Should the member believe that the contemplated action may violate a law, or the member expects to disclose confidential client information, the member is encouraged to consult the member company's environmental legal counsel.
- C. Members should make public statements only in an objective and truthful manner. Members should avoid making sensational, exaggerated or unfounded statements that may deceive or create a mis-impression among the public. When making any public statement, members should disclose to a reasonable degree whether the statement is based mainly on fact or includes an opinion.