

American Geological Institute's Guidelines for Ethical Professional Conduct

April 2, 1999

(Note: The American Geological Institute became the American Geosciences Institute in October 2011.)

The American Geological Institute (AGI) expects the profession to adhere to the highest ethical standards in all professional activities. The following aspirational guidelines are presented as representative of the core values that form the foundation of the ethics for the geoscience profession. They are presented as the highest common denominator of values for the profession.

Geoscientists should strive to advance the integrity, honor, and dignity of their profession by undertaking the following:

- Use their knowledge and skill to enhance understanding of Earth for the well-being of society and the environment;
- Exhibit honesty in professional actions at all times;
- Work to enhance the prestige of the geoscience profession; and
- Support the profession and technical societies of the profession

More specifically, the position of AGI is that geoscientists must acknowledge responsibility to:

The Public and Society

Geoscientists should hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public in applications of geoscience knowledge to society's needs. Efforts should be made to educate the public on all matters related to the geosciences (e.g., hazards, resources, and environment). Public comments on geoscience matters should be made with care and accuracy, without unsubstantiated, exaggerated, or premature statements; they should be made clearly and concisely.

The Environment

Geoscientists should strive to protect our natural environment. They should understand and anticipate the environmental consequences of their work and should disclose the consequences of recommended actions. They should acknowledge that resource extraction and use are necessary to the existence of our society and that such should be undertaken in an environmentally and economically responsible manner.

The Geosciences

Geoscientists should seek to advance their science, understand the limitations of their knowledge, and respect the truth. They should ensure that their scientific contributions, as well as those of their collaborators, are thorough, accurate, and unbiased in design, implementation, and presentation.

The Profession

Geoscientists should continue professional development to remain current in their field. They should maintain honesty and integrity in all conduct and publications, fully acknowledge the contributions of others, and accept responsibility for their own errors. They should provide scientific service only in areas of competency. Economic consequences and implications of geologic work should be acknowledged. Conflicts of interest, both

real and perceived, should be acknowledged and avoided, when appropriate. Scientific misconduct, including falsification or fabrication of data and plagiarism, is unacceptable in the geoscience profession.

The Employer

Geoscientists should promote and protect the legitimate interests of their employers, perform work honestly and competently, avoid conflicts of interest, safeguard proprietary information, and provide adequate notice before leaving an employer.

Employees

Geoscientists should treat their employees with respect and trust with concern for their well-being, provide a safe and congenial working environment and fair compensation. They should properly acknowledge employees' professional contributions and should encourage professional career development.

Clients

Geoscientists should serve clients faithfully and only in technical areas of competency. They should advise honestly, regardless of the impact of the advice, respect confidentiality, and charge fairly.

Students

Geoscientists should treat their mentorship of students as a trust conferred by the profession for the promotion of students' learning and professional development. Each student should be treated with respect and without exploitation.

Colleagues and Associates

Geoscientists should treat their colleagues and associates with courtesy, encourage them, learn with them, share and exchange ideas, and acknowledge their contributions. They should strive to ensure that colleagues and associates respect the ethical principles of the profession and they should nurture and mentor young professionals.

AGI encourages its member societies to develop guidelines or codes of ethical conduct to reflect their specific needs. In some cases, member societies may wish to develop specific codes of conduct that provide detailed information related to the expectations of a particular discipline, while other societies may choose to offer more generalized guidelines or may reference codes or guidelines from yet other societies. A society may desire to address issues related to enforcement of the code with appropriate disciplinary actions. Perceptions of what constitutes ethical conduct vary among cultures and countries; this fact may need to be considered by member societies. While AGI expects its member societies to decide on the level to which they should pursue this suggestion, the Institute is willing to provide guidance to the extent it can.

AGI credits the American Chemical Society's *The Chemist's Code of Conduct*, from which many of these concepts were drawn.

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