



AIA Code of Ethics

Rules of Conduct

ARC 486 – Architectural Design V

Ethics Presentation

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- Summary of mandatory rules
- Ethics Case Study: The Harmon Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada

AIA Code Structure

The Code has three tiers:

1. Canons – broad guiding principles
2. Ethical Standards – specific goals
3. Rules of Conduct – mandatory requirements

This Code applies to all AIA members globally

- Rules of Conduct are enforceable parts of the AIA Code and Violations may lead to disciplinary action.

Canon I – General Obligations

- Rule 1.101 – Practice with care and competence.
- Rule 1.401 – No harassment or discrimination.
- Rule 1.402 – No conduct showing disregard for others' rights.
- Rule 1.403 – Do not design spaces intended for execution.
- Rule 1.404 – Do not design spaces for torture or solitary confinement.

Canon II – Obligations to the Public

- Rule 2.101 – Do not violate the law in practice.
- Rule 2.102 – No gifts or payments to influence officials.
- Rule 2.103 – Public architects cannot accept gifts to influence judgment.
- Rule 2.104 – Do not engage in conduct of fraud.
- Rule 2.105 – Report unsafe decisions to proper authorities.
- (a) advise employer or client against the decision
 - (b) refuse consent to the decision
 - (c) report the decision to public official

Canon II – Obligations to the Public (Continued)

- Rule 2.106 – Do not help clients commit illegal or fraudulent acts.
- Rule 2.301 – Disclose any economic or compensated interest when making public statements.
- Rule 2.401 – Inform clients about potential environmental impacts of design decisions.

Canon III – Obligations to the Client

- Rule 3.101 – Follow applicable laws and regulations.
- Rule 3.102 – Accept work only if qualified.
- Rule 3.103 – Do not change project goals without client's consent.
- Rule 3.201 – Avoid and disclose conflicts of interest.
- Rule 3.202 – Make decisions impartially when judging contract performance.
- Rule 3.301 – Do not mislead clients about capabilities.
- Rule 3.401 – Keep client confidences unless legally required to share.

Canon IV – Obligations to the Profession

- Rule 4.101 – Report serious violations by AIA members with reasonable belief.
- Rule 4.102 – Do not sign work for which you do not have responsible control.
- Rule 4.103 – No false professional statements.
- Rule 4.201 – Do not exaggerate qualifications or make false statements when claiming credit.
- Rule 4.202 – Ensure employees follow the Code.

Canon V – Obligations to Colleagues

- Rule 5.101 – Treat colleagues with mutual respect, provide unbiased work environment.
- Rule 5.201 – Help interns properly document experience for licensure.
- Rule 5.301 – Credit others for their contributions.
- Rule 5.302 – Do not take firm data or designs without permission.
- Rule 5.303 – Allow reasonable access to non-confidential work materials, do not withhold permission.

Canon VI – Obligations to the Environment

- Rule 6.501 – Consider environmental effects with clients during project decisions.

Rules of Application and Enforcement

1. Code enforcement is administered by a National Ethics Council, appointed by AIA Board of Directors
 2. Formal Changes filed directly with National Ethics Council
 3. Penalties
 - a. Admonition
 - b. Censure
 - c. Suspension of membership for a period of time
 - d. Termination of membership.
 4. Appeal Procedures are available
 5. All proceedings are confidential, all other penalties shall be public
- Construction Ethics by Barbara Jackson : warns against improper bidding, fraud, ignoring safety.
 - NSPE Code of Ethics for Engineers : stresses safety, honesty, and fairness in all work.
 - Goal of Ethics across Professions : protect public welfare, act truthfully, avoid conflicts of interest.

The Harmon Hotel, Las Vegas, Nevada



Case Study Summary:

The Harmon Hotel was proposed to be a 49-story luxury hotel and housing tower as part of a large CityCenter complex.

During the construction of The Harmon Hotel, in 2007, it was discovered that the steel reinforcing bars were placed incorrectly on multiple floors.

Blame was arguably placed on different parties such as the general contractor, rebar subcontractor, the structural engineer, and the third-party inspector.

After long litigation, it was settled that many tests reported pervasive defects and that the building could be at risk in environmental conditions such as earthquakes.

This resulted in the building's demolition in 2014.

Case Findings

What Went Wrong...

- Rebar was not placed as shown in structural drawings across floors 6-20.
- Miscommunication between the designer, contractor, subcontractor, and inspections, leaving no party under full control.
- Conflict in opinions delayed resolution and further complicated ethical and legal duties.



Major Problems



The Harmon Hotel case exposed serious shortcomings in the project's designers, contractors, and inspectors' professional duty, management, and communication. Inaccurate adherence to structural designs during construction resulted in numerous rebar placement mistakes and jeopardized structural safety. It was uncertain who was in charge of quality control because there was unclear accountability among the contractor, engineer, and architect. These problems were not discovered in a timely manner by inspections, and disputes between the parties further postponed corrective measures. The project was eventually put on hold and demolished as a result of the total loss of trust brought on by the failure in ethical oversight and coordination.

Conclusion and Recommendations



The Harmon case demonstrates how client decisions, design, construction, and inspection can all interact to produce serious ethical and safety issues. Inadequate accountability and communication can lead to lengthy legal proceedings and catastrophic loss.

To prevent potential errors like the Harmon Hotel, projects should create clear contractual duties and determine who is in charge of design revisions and construction reviews. To ensure accuracy, complex structures should undergo independent peer evaluations prior to and during construction. Strong on-site quality control, including daily inspections and documented sign-offs, is critical, as is empowering third-party inspectors to stop risky activity and disclose results as soon as possible. If faults occur, evidence should be carefully preserved, and all parties must put safety ahead of cost or time. In conclusion, transparency with regulators, clients, and the general public, combined with early mediation and unbiased expert opinion, aids in the maintenance of ethical integrity and prevents risk of hazards.