



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Furnishing Limited Advice (adapted from NSPE Case No. 90-7)

Year

1999

Description

Is it ethical for an engineer to work for a local government agency and for a consulting firm that deals with this agency?

Body

O'Malley, a professional engineer who works for a design consulting firm, is also retained by a municipality to furnish advice, perform studies, and review requests for proposals (RFPs). Under the terms of the agreement with the Municipality, O'Malley is barred from preparing the plans for any private client of the consulting firm, if those plans will eventually be submitted to the Municipality for review or approval. O'Malley has a similar agreement with the consulting firm. However, other people working for the design consulting firm can help clients prepare plans to submit to the Municipality.

Are the arrangements described above sufficient to prevent a conflict of interest? Would having additional information change your assessment of the situation? If so, what information? How would it be useful?

Suppose Engineers O'Connor and O'Brien of the design consulting firm are preparing plans for a client which will be submitted to the municipality. O'Connor and O'Brien are confronted with a problem in preparing those plans that O'Malley

has the expertise to answer. O'Connor and O'Brien approach O'Malley with the problem and ask for his advice.

What should O'Malley do? Are the arrangements described above sufficient to provide O'Malley with the proper guidance?

[NSPE Code of Ethics](#) An earlier version may have been used in this case.

Notes

See the original NSPE case at: [Furnishing Limited Advice - Case No. 90-7](#).

Rights

Use of Materials on the OEC

Resource Type

Open-ended scenario

Parent Collection

Professional Ethics in Engineering Practice: Discussion Cases Based on NSPE BER Cases

Topics

Conflict of Interest

Bidding Process

Discipline(s)

Engineering

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