



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# **Intellectual Property of Engineers in Private Practice (adapted from NSPE Case No. 83-3)**

## **Year**

1999

## **Description**

This is an open-ended scenario for discussion based on a case from the NSPE Board of Ethical Review. An engineer submits a proposal to a county council, a member of which makes this proposal available to another engineer developing a proposal for a different county project. The second engineer uses the first engineer's information and data without the first engineer's consent.

## **Body**

Wu, an engineer, submitted a project proposal to the City Council. The proposal included technical information and data that the Council had requested. A staff member of the Council made Wu's proposal available to Thornberry, another engineer. Thornberry used Wu's proposal to develop another proposal for a somewhat different project and submitted it to the Council. The amount of Wu's information that Thornberry actually used is disputed between the parties.

Is Thornberry guilty of plagiarism? If not, was this in some other way an unfair use of Wu's information? What was the City Council's responsibility in the handling of Wu's proposal? What further information would you like to have, and what difference would it make to your evaluation?

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

## **Notes**

See the original NSPE case at: [Using Technical Proposal of Another Without Consent - Case No. 83-3](#).

## **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**

Intellectual Property and Patents  
Plagiarism

## **Discipline(s)**

Engineering

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