
UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

4. ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

TOTAL UNIT: 2 hours

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this unit, the students should be able to:

- Φ Identify potential ethical issues that can arise in an emergency.
 - Φ Describe the components of ethical decision making.
 - Φ Apply the components of ethical decision making to an emergency scenario.
-

SCOPE

The scope of this unit includes:

- Φ Unit Overview.
 - Φ Decision Making.
 - Φ Small-Group Exercise: Ethical Decision Making.
 - Φ Summary and Transition.
-

METHODOLOGY

The instructor will begin with a lecture/discussion that introduces and describes ethical decision making and the issues that ethics raises during emergency operations. Using Handout 4.1, the instructor will walk the students through the components of ethical decision making, stressing that ethical decision making requires:

- Φ An ethical commitment.
- Φ Ethical consciousness.
- Φ Ethical competency.

The instructor will briefly describe the “stakeholder” concept to explain that each person, group, or individual who is affected by a decision has a moral claim on it. Then, the instructor will facilitate a group discussion about how to use the stakeholder concept to identify who should be involved in the decision and to what degree and to identify potential ethical conflicts arising from a decision.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

METHODOLOGY (Continued)

Next, the students will complete a small-group exercise in which they respond to scenarios that pose potential ethical issues. Following the exercise, the instructor will facilitate a group discussion of the probable stakeholders, decisions made, and the potential consequences of the decision(s). During the discussion, the instructor will solicit suggestions from the class and make suggestions for making better decisions.

Finally, the instructor will transition to the Final Exercise.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

The materials required to conduct Unit 4 include:

- Φ This Instructor Guide.
- Φ The Student Manual.
- Φ Visuals 4.1 through 4.5 (or the PowerPoint disk).
- Φ Handout 4.1, Ethical Decision Making.
- Φ An easel pad and markers.

EQUIPMENT REQUIRED

The equipment required to conduct Unit 4 includes:

- Φ Overhead projector (or computer with display unit).
- Φ One easel pad and markers for each table group.

TIME PLAN

The suggested time plan for this unit is shown below. Note, however, that adjustment may be necessary based on class size.

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Time</i>
Unit Overview	5 minutes
Decision Making	30 minutes
Small-Group Exercise: Ethical Decision Making	80 minutes
Summary and Transition	5 minutes
<i>Total Time:</i>	<i>2 hours</i>

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

4. ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

TOTAL UNIT: 2 hours

TOTAL TOPIC:
5 minutes

UNIT OVERVIEW

Visual
4.1



Unit Objectives

- ☞ Identify ethical issues in an emergency.
- ☞ Describe components of ethical decision making.
- ☞ Apply the components to an emergency.

Visual 4.1

Introduce this unit by explaining that, often, decisions made during an emergency involve ethical issues that are not resolved easily. This unit will describe some of the ethical issues that the students may face and ways in which they can address the issues. The objectives for this unit are to enable the students to:

- Φ Identify potential ethical issues that can arise in an emergency.
 - Φ Describe the components of ethical decision making.
 - Φ Apply the components of ethical decision making to an emergency scenario.
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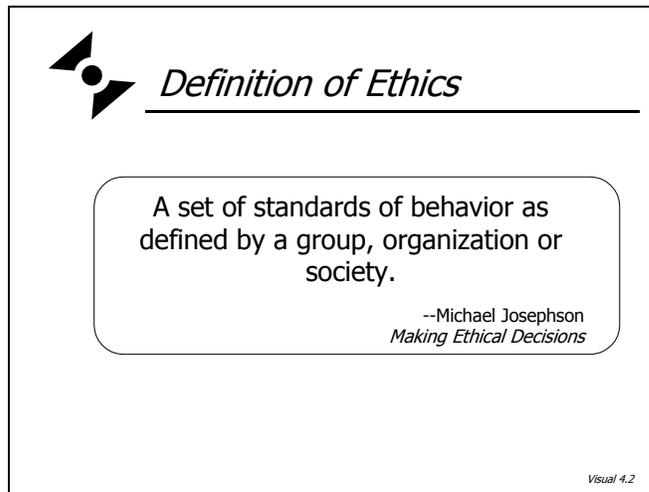
UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

TOTAL TOPIC:
30 minutes

DECISION MAKING

Point out that, as employees, the students represent their organizations and their professions. Their actions must instill trust and confidence in those with whom they work and in those who depend on them for assistance. In an emergency situation, victims and coworkers must be able to count on them to carry out their responsibilities in a professional and fair manner.

Visual
4.2



Ethics is a set of standards of behavior that guides our behavior, both as individuals and as part of larger organizations. The ethical principles for this discussion are simple standards of right and wrong that we learn as children, such as being honest, being fair, and treating others with respect.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS



Ask the group:

Have you ever had to confront ethical issues during an emergency?

Ask if anyone would be willing to share their experience with the class.



Instructor's Note: Ethical decisions sometimes have negative consequences that the students may not be willing to discuss openly. If no one is willing to share their situation, continue to Visual 4.3 without hesitation.

If one or more students are willing to provide examples, summarize the discussion and link it, if possible, to the next visual.

Visual
4.3



Ethical Don'ts

- ☞ Don't use your position to seek personal gain.
- ☞ Don't exceed your authority or make promises.
- ☞ Avoid even the appearance of ethical violations.

Visual 4.3

These “Don'ts” address particular ethical challenges in a crisis or emergency situation.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS



Ask the group:

What is an example of seeking personal gain?

If not mentioned by the students, suggest:

- Φ Soliciting gifts.
- Φ Making official decisions that benefit you financially.
- Φ Using inside information gained through your position to benefit yourself and/or your family.
- Φ Using company time or property (e.g., phone or car) for personal reasons.
- Φ Using your official position or accepting compensation to endorse a product.

Emphasize that avoiding even the appearance of ethical violations means that you need to take the extra step of making sure your actions (even if they are above-board) could not be seen as being unethical. Think about how your actions would read on the front page of the newspaper.

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DECISION MAKING

ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Visual
4.4



Ethical Do's

- ☞ Place the law and ethical principles above private gain.
- ☞ Act impartially.
- ☞ Protect and conserve department property.
- ☞ Put forth honest effort.

Visual 4.4

Keep these “Dos” in mind.



Ask the group:

What is an example of preferential treatment by an emergency worker (i.e., not acting impartially)?

If not mentioned by the students, suggest:

- Φ Providing more information to one group of victims than to another group.
- Φ Favoring one contractor over another.

Tell the students that:

- Φ Acting impartially means not showing favoritism to one party with conflicting interests over another. Two aids in acting impartially include making sure all affected parties have full disclosure and seeking prior authorization before taking action.
- Φ Protecting and conserving the jurisdiction’s property applies both to your actions and to the actions you should take if you observe fraud, waste, or abuse.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

Visual
4.5



Review the reasons for compliance to ethical standards by making the following points:

- Φ Complying with ethical standards keeps your conscience clear and protects your professional reputation.
- Φ Leaders must model the behavior they desire and expect from subordinates.
- Φ In addition to the loss of public trust, there are consequences for noncompliance, including administrative and criminal sanctions.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

ETHICAL DECISION MAKING



Handout 4.1

Distribute Handout 4.1, Ethical Decision Making at this point.

Ethical decision making requires being aware of your own and your organization's ethical values and applying them when necessary. It involves being sensitive to the impact of your decisions and being able to evaluate complex, ambiguous, and/or incomplete facts. Three major components of ethical decision making are:

- Φ Ethical commitment.
- Φ Ethical consciousness.
- Φ Ethical competency.

Ethical Commitment (Motivation) is demonstrating a strong desire to act ethically and to do the right thing, especially when ethics imposes financial, social or psychological costs. A crisis or emergency confronts us with many situations that test ethical commitment. Hence, the students need to be very clear about their own ethical values and have a strong understanding of ethical standards of conduct.

Ethical Consciousness (Awareness) involves seeing and understanding the ethical implications of our behavior and applying our ethical values to our daily lives. Understanding that people's perceptions are their reality—what we understand to be perfectly legal conduct may be perceived by taxpayers as improper or inappropriate.

Ethical Competency (Skill) involves being competent in ethical decision making skills which include:

- Φ **Evaluation.** The ability to collect and evaluate relevant facts. Knowing when to stop collecting facts and to make prudent decisions based on incomplete and ambiguous facts.
- Φ **Creativity.** The capacity to develop resourceful means of accomplishing goals in ways that avoid or minimize ethical problems.
- Φ **Prediction.** The ability to foresee the potential consequences of conduct and assess the likelihood or risk that persons will be helped or harmed by an act.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

DECISION MAKING

THE STAKEHOLDER CONCEPT

Ethical individuals understand that each person, group, or individual who is affected by their decisions is a stakeholder who has a moral claim on them. They consider the potential impact of their decisions on others when making decisions. They also take steps to avoid unjustified harm.



Ask the group:

How can you use the stakeholder concept to identify who should be involved in a decision?

Allow the group time to respond. Then explain that they should use the stakeholder concept to systematically identify every party involved—all the conflicting interests that will be affected by the decision.

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

TOTAL EXERCISE:
80 minutes

SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING



Page 4-6

Explain that this exercise will enable the students to respond to scenarios involving ethical decisions. Follow these instructions to conduct this activity:

1. Tell the student to turn to page 4-6 in their Student Manuals.
2. Tell the students that they will work in their table groups to complete this exercise. Assign one case study to each table group.
3. Tell the group that they will have 30 minutes to read the case study and answer the question(s).
4. After all of the groups have finished, ask a spokesperson from each group to report the group's answer(s).
5. For each case study, facilitate a class discussion of the probable stakeholders, decisions made, and the potential consequences of the decisions. Solicit suggestions from the class and make suggestions for making better decisions.

Case Study #1: Photo Opportunity

Chris is a member of the Joint Information Center staff and an excellent photographer. During the past 2 weeks, he has been photographing the disaster damage and victims' reactions to a flooding disaster. Chris is so excited about the quality of the photos that he sent copies of them to a camera manufacturer that he works for as a freelance photographer. The photos were taken during his off hours, using camera equipment and film that the manufacturer gave to Chris. Many of the photos were taken in an area that was closed to the public after the disaster. The photos include close-up shots of disaster victims. The camera manufacturer asked Chris if they could use his photos and a picture of Chris at the disaster site wearing his SEMA hat in their promotional materials. Chris told the manufacturer that it would be fine as long as he did not accept compensation for the photos.

Are Chris' actions ethical? Explain why or why not.

Using a photo of Chris with a SEMA hat would be using his official position to endorse a product. This violates the ethics standards even if he does not receive any compensation. Chris may have been compensated indirectly by having accepted a free camera and film from the manufacturer. Also, Chris had access to restricted areas to photograph that other photographers did not have access to. Finally, the disaster victims did not agree to have their images used in promotional materials. How do you think disaster victims may feel to see their time of grief being used to sell cameras?

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SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Case Study #2: An Honest Day's Work

Rose is working as part of the mayor's community outreach program. People have been complaining bitterly to her about price gouging by local contractors. Rose has heard many stories of contractors taking down payments and failing to show up to do the work when they promised. Rose's brother Joe is a builder who lives in a nearby State. Rose knows that Joe will bring a crew into the State and do high-quality work at a fair price. However, before Joe goes to the trouble of relocating his crew, he needs to know if there will be enough work to cover his expenses. Rose tells Joe that she cannot solicit work for him, but that she will give him a list of names and telephone numbers she has visited as part of her community relations activities. Rose knows that the individuals on her list will be very relieved to finally hear from a reputable contractor.

Are Rose's actions ethical? Explain why or why not.

The release of names and telephone numbers of disaster victims is a violation of the Privacy Act. Even though Rose is trying to help the people who are in search of an honest contractor, her actions could be viewed as using access to nonpublic information to promote her brother's firm.

Case Study #3: What's a Few Hours?

Jack works at the Emergency Operations Center from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Betty noticed that after 6:00 p.m., Jack never seems busy at his desk, except when the supervisor comes by. But as soon as the supervisor is gone, Jack sits with his hands folded across his chest. Betty decides to ask Jack why he stays until 8:00 when his work seems to be done by 6:00 every night. Jack replies that it would be unfair for him to get fewer hours than everyone else working at the center. Betty decides not to push the issue further and ignores the situation.

Are Jack's actions ethical? Explain why or why not.

Jack's actions are a misuse of official time and constitute a wasteful use of departmental resources. His actions are not ethical.

Are Betty's actions ethical? Explain why or why not?

Betty has an obligation to report fraud, waste, or abuse. By ignoring the situation, Betty has also violated her ethical obligations.

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SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Case Study #4: This One's on the House

The crisis situation is under control. Fifteen local emergency staff members go to a favorite after-work spot near the site for a celebration. The pub's business has increased since moving near the fire station. Everyone orders full dinners and several rounds of drinks. When it's time to leave, the group asks for the check. The owner of the pub, who received disaster assistance, insists that tonight's celebration be on her. She says, "It's the least I can do. You have been wonderful for my business." The staff members explain that they appreciate her gesture, but that they need to pay something. They ask her if they can at least leave a big tip.

Are the staff members' actions ethical? Explain why or why not.

The acceptance of food and drink could be seen as a payback for the owner receiving disaster assistance. To avoid the appearance of unethical action, the group should pay for their dinners and drinks, not just leave a tip. Principles of Ethical Conduct for Federal Employees (#14) states: "Employees shall endeavor to avoid any actions creating the appearance that they are violating the law or the ethical standards set forth in the Standards of Ethical Conduct. Whether particular circumstances create an appearance that the law or these standards have been violated shall be determined from the perspective of a reasonable person with knowledge of the relevant facts."

UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

TOTAL TOPIC:
5 minutes

SUMMARY AND TRANSITION

Review the components of ethical decisions with the group.

Ask if there are any questions before moving on to the Final Exercise.
