
UNIT 4: ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING

4. ETHICS AND DECISION MAKING



Unit Objectives

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

Visual 4.1

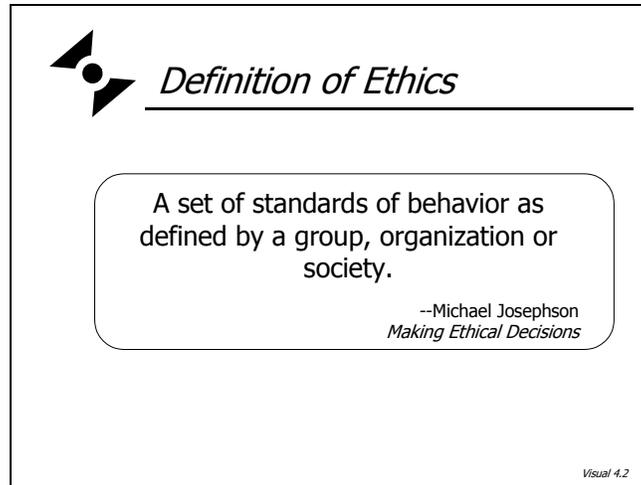
Often, decisions made during an emergency involve ethical issues that are not resolved easily. This unit will describe some of the ethical issues that you may face and ways in which you can address the issues. The objectives for this unit are to enable you to:

- 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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DECISION MAKING

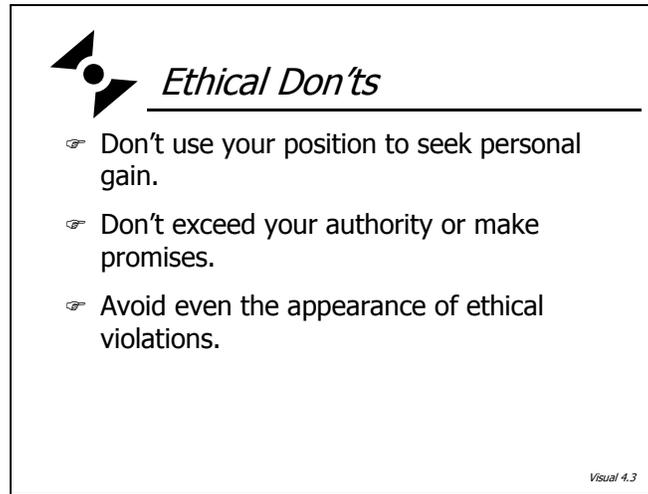
As employees, you represent your organizations and your professions. Your actions must instill trust and confidence in those with whom you work and in those who depend on you for assistance. In an emergency situation, victims and coworkers must be able to count on you to carry out your responsibilities in a professional and fair manner.



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.

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ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

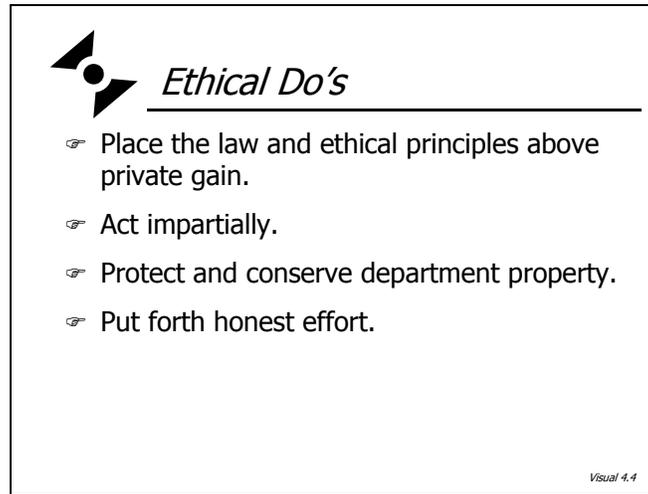


These “Don’ts” address particular ethical challenges in a crisis or emergency situation.

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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ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS



Keep these “Dos” in mind.

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.

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.

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ETHICAL ISSUES IN EMERGENCY OPERATIONS



Complying with ethical standards keeps your conscience clear and protects your professional reputation.

Leaders must model the behavior they desire and expect from subordinates.

In addition to the loss of public trust, there are consequences for noncompliance, including administrative and criminal sanctions.

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SMALL-GROUP EXERCISE: ETHICAL DECISION MAKING

Instructions: Follow these steps to complete this activity:

1. Work in your table groups to complete this exercise.
2. You will have 30 minutes to read the case study and answer the question(s).
3. Select a spokesperson from your group to report your group's answer(s).

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.

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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.

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.

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

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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. 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.
