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Committing to Fair Play: The IIBEC Code of Ethics



As I work on this month's president's message, I am watching the US Open and just competed in my golf club's member-guest tournament. Many of you know that I am fan of the sport and enjoy playing—my wife will tell you that I am really obsessed. Golf can be a very difficult and humbling sport, but also a very rewarding one. One reason that I am such a fan is that there is an honor to the game—ethics and integrity are expected of all players. The ball is small, and the course is large, so it's pretty likely that no one will see every action you take. It is often what you do when no one is looking that matters the most.

One of the challenges of playing golf is knowing the rules, which can be quite complicated. For example, when you hit your ball into a hazard, it helps to know how to take a proper drop to get the ball back on the course. If you don't play often, you may not know what your options are. But if you have a thorough understanding of the rules, you can assess the situation strategically. Let's say you are on a hill when you need to drop your ball. You carefully pick where to drop, and the ball bounces closer to the hole. After two drops, you can then physically place the ball, which may result in a more preferred lie than you otherwise may have had. This is not cheating or unethical. Rather, because you know the rules and use them properly, the ball is now placed potentially in a more favorable lie, or position.

When I think about our IIBEC Code of Ethics, I see parallels to the game of golf. The code is also about honor and understanding the rules of fair play. Every year, we are reminded to review the code and renew our commitment to it. One of the great things about our association is the fact that we have a Code of Ethics—not every organization does. In fact, IIBEC has always had an ethics policy.

Today, the IIBEC Code of Ethics contains three fundamental canons that our members and registrants must uphold:

- Holding paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public
- Upholding ethical standards in our professional affairs
- Recognizing the value and contributions of others

The code then provides rules of practice: 11 items and numerous subitems to define how we are to achieve the fundamental canons. The Code of Ethics also outlines the process of enforcement for code violations. However, I am proud to say that during my time on the IIBEC board as a region director and on the executive committee, we have had to take action on only a very few ethics complaints. This is a testament to the honorable nature of our members. Like the best competitors in golf, IIBEC members understand that doing what is right when no one is looking is both a basic expectation *and* a way to achieve great outcomes.

In my last president's message, I discussed how IIBEC is working with a marketing consultant to help us better communicate our distinctive role in the design and construction industry. As we continue that work (see the article on page 40), as well as the work of the Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion, and—for that matter—any other work related to IIBEC, keeping our Code of Ethics in front of mind will make us stronger and leaders in our industry. To this end, expect to see stories in future issues of *IIBEC Interface* that further explore ethical and unethical situations.

Currently, the Ethics Committee is reviewing our Code of Ethics to make sure its fundamental canons and rules of practice properly address the various challenges we face in our industry today. Though the code may be revised from time to time, it is never meant to shame or demean anyone. To the contrary, it is intended to showcase the strengths of our members and help define what sets us apart as professionals. Let's talk about how our Code of Ethics can be a good thing for the industry, our clients, and our profession. After all, no one wants to play with a sandbagger.