



# International Radiation Protection Association

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Geoffrey A. M. Webb  
(United Kingdom)

**Vice-President:**

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Christian Wernli  
(Switzerland)

Ref: IRPA 04/05

To: IRPA Associate Societies

From: The President

## IRPA Code of Ethics, Draft for Adoption

A number of comments have been received on the second draft Code of Ethics, circulated to Societies under cover of a note from me dated 28 October 2003

The attached Draft for Adoption has been prepared on the basis of these comments. In preparing the draft more weight has been given to comments and proposals from Societies than to those from individuals, although in some cases individuals have made helpful suggestions, especially regarding wording.

Some explanations as to the changes made and the reasons for them are found in the notes. The notes are not however an integral part of the Code.

You are reminded that the previous drafts and other background information is available on the IRPA Ethics Forum accessible via the IRPA web-site.

With a view to adoption of the Code in Madrid, Societies are now requested to examine this draft. There will be a further opportunity for discussion during the Associate Societies Forum, but it is the hope of the Executive Council that an agreed Draft Code can be presented to the General Assembly for adoption.

Geoffrey Webb  
IRPA President  
March 2004.

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## IRPA Code of Ethics

These principles are intended to aid members of IRPA Associate Societies in maintaining a professional level of ethical conduct. They are to be regarded as guidelines using which members may determine the propriety of their conduct in all relationships in which they are exercising their professional expertise.

If there is reason to believe that a member has breached this Code of Ethics, the Society to which the member belongs is expected to investigate and take appropriate measures.

1. Members shall exercise their professional skill and judgement to the best of their ability and discharge their responsibilities with integrity.
2. Members shall not allow conflict of interest, management pressures or possible self-interest to compromise their professional judgement and advice. In particular members shall not compromise public welfare and safety in favour of an employer's interest.
3. Members shall not undertake any employment or consultation that is contrary to the public interest or to the law.
4. Members shall protect the confidentiality of information obtained during the course of their professional duties, provided that such protection is not in itself unethical or illegal.
5. Members shall ensure that relations with interested parties, other professionals and the general public are based on, and reflect, the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and fairness.
6. Members should satisfy themselves as to the extent and content of the professional functions required in any particular circumstances, especially those involving the public safety. Members should not undertake professional obligations that they are not qualified, or do not believe themselves to be competent, to discharge.
7. Members should take all reasonable steps to ensure that persons carrying out work done under their supervision or direction are competent, and not under undue pressure from workload or other causes.
8. Members should strive to improve their own professional knowledge, skill and competence.
9. Professional reports, statements, publications or advice produced by members should be based on sound radiation protection principles and science, be accurate to the best of their knowledge and be appropriately attributed.
10. Members should, whenever practicable and appropriate, correct misleading, sensational and unwarranted statements by others concerning radiation and radiation protection.
11. Members should take advantage of opportunities to increase public understanding of radiation protection and of the aims and objectives of IRPA and their own Society.

IRPA. May 2004.

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Notes:

**Title:**

The majority of the comments favoured the title "Code of Ethics".

**General comments:**

There was not complete agreement on the use of the terms "shall" or "should". However several suggestions on particular paragraphs were in agreement; these used "shall" in some cases and "should" in others. This seemed to reflect a view that some items were essential to a high standard of ethical conduct whereas other were highly desirable. In the draft this approach has been used so there are both "shall" and "should" statements.

There was also a suggestion to modify the order so as to group general statements, those pertaining to employment, and those relating more to personal conduct. This has been done and it turns out that it results in most of the "shall" statements coming towards the front of the new order.

There were suggestions to simplify and eliminate unnecessary words, for example to delete "at all times" in para 1.

**Specific comments:**

**Preamble para 2.** It was felt that as Societies are autonomous, an IRPA Code could not require them to take any particular actions so use of "shall" was not appropriate. A different form of words, "is expected to", more suited to a preambular statement has therefore been proposed. There was also general agreement, in line with the above reasoning, that IRPA should not propose any specific course of action by a Society.

**Para 6 (Old para 5).** As a result of a number of comments, this para has been redrafted.

**Para 7 (Old para 8).** Although there were suggestions that this be deleted, others regarded it is important to retain. It has been reworded to try to overcome the major objections.

**Para 8 (Old para 4).** There were a number of comments on the wording of this paragraph. In particular that to "maintain" could be inappropriate in a time of changing skills needs. The revised proposal is now close to the wording in the Code of the US Health Physics Society.

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