

- I.3. - Code of Ethics
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ENGINEERING TITLES -- USE OF ENGINEERING TITLE BY NON-ENGINEERS

FACTS:

ENGCO, an engineering firm, distributes a brochure that, along with the usual information, contains a listing of key personnel. Some are licensed professional engineers; others are not. In some instances, key personnel who do not hold an engineering degree and may in fact be high school graduates only, are given such titles in the brochure as "Engineer", "Design Engineer", etc. This practice has arisen from federal agency engineering contracts that refer to inspection personnel as "Engineers." ENGCO is concerned that the company brochure may be conveying a misrepresentation, implying that there are more engineers on its staff than is the true situation.

QUESTION:

Is it ethical for ENGCO to refer to its non-degreed personnel as "engineers"?

DISCUSSION:

Although the industry and governmental agencies sometimes use the term indiscriminately, we in the profession must not. Most states even have it in their law (licensing act) how and when "engineer" can be used, usually requiring a college degree and/or meeting licensing requirements.

An engineering firms brochure is a sales tool and should describe accurately the academic qualifications of it's employees. People reading and relying on the information in an engineering brochure would assume the title "engineer" means one educated or registered as such. The use of the term for high school graduates is a gross misrepresentation of the firms qualifications and essentially falsifying them. If the non-degreed personnel have passed the state requirements for licensed, they may use the term regardless of their formal education.

CONCLUSION:

It is not ethical for ENGCO to refer to it's non-degreed/non-registered personnel as "engineers".

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