



INTERNATIONAL FIRE SERVICE ACCREDITATION CONGRESS

CODE OF CONDUCT

Revised and Adopted April 2015





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Acknowledgements

Many contributed to the development of this Code of Conduct. The Cape Breton and Halifax Regional Municipalities provided the IFSAC Ethics Committee with the main template and we are grateful for their help. Members of IFSAC were asked numerous times for input and the members of the Committee were especially appreciative of all suggestions. Certainly, the IFSAC staff provided much help to each member of the Committee.

What follows is a combination of existing rules, principles, normal practices, and expected norms of behavior. Each member of IFSAC represents fire and safety organizations, which have their own well-established standards of behavior. This provided us with framework to incorporate principles, which apply to our work within IFSAC.

All of the members of the Committee extend our thanks to those who provided help over the last two and one-half years of development. Members of the Committee are: Barbara Gagner, Chair; Larry Preston, Parliamentarian; Bernie Mackinnon; Terry Heyns; Randy Souther; Bernie Vrona; Rick Karasaki; Brenda Popko; Doug Wood; and Geoff Burston.



International Fire Service Accreditation Congress Ethical Conduct Policy

Date:

Approved:

Introduction

It is the policy of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress (IFSAC) to establish a high standard of conduct and to hold all members and staff accountable to abide by the IFSAC Code of Conduct.

Objectives

- 1) Promote high standards of professional conduct.
- 2) Provide guidelines for identifying potential conflicts of interest and/or breaches of trust or confidence that impact and or affect IFSAC.
- 3) Help ensure that IFSAC members and staff do not place themselves, or permit themselves to be placed, in a position, which would constitute a conflict of interest or breach of trust or confidence.

Definitions

Assembly - means the Degree Assembly and Certificate Assembly

Council of Governors (COG) - The COG serves as a liaison between the two assemblies

IFSAC Assets - includes all property and services of the IFSAC.

Code - Code of Conduct

Code of Conduct

All members and staff of IFSAC are required to abide by the following code:

- 1) **Authority:** Members of IFSAC and IFSAC committee members must not exceed their authority, breach the operating rules as defined in IFSAC bylaws, or ask others to do so.
- 2) **Personal Conduct:** All members and staff of IFSAC will perform their duties with honesty and integrity in a manner that is helpful, respectful, and courteous and with due regard to



equity, gender, age, disability, and human dignity. Members of IFSAC will not behave in a manner that could result in a conflict of interest.

- 3) **Professional Conduct:** IFSAC members are entrusted with upholding and adhering to the constitution, bylaws, and policies of the IFSAC.
- 4) **Use of IFSAC Property:** Members will use and permit the use of IFSAC assets for the performance of IFSAC sanctioned duties or as approved. Members will safeguard and protect IFSAC assets. Members will not use IFSAC assets if the use could be offensive or inappropriate.
- 5) **Obligations to Membership:** No member in authority shall grant any special consideration, treatment, or advantage to any IFSAC member beyond that which is accorded to all members.
- 6) **Disclosure of Confidential and Sensitive Information:** No IFSAC member shall, without proper authorization, disclose confidential information concerning the members or affairs of IFSAC; nor shall they use such information to advance the financial or personal interest of themselves or others.
- 7) **Conflict of Interest:** No member of IFSAC shall engage in any business transaction or have a financial or personal interest, direct or indirect, which is incompatible with the proper discharge of their official duties or would impair, or reasonably give the perception of impairing, their independence of judgment or action in the performance of their duties.

Where an actual or perceived conflict of interest arises, IFSAC members are required to declare a conflict and take appropriate action to remove themselves from the conflict situation.

The following are situations which constitute general conflicts of interest:

- a) **Incompatible Employment:** No IFSAC member shall engage in or accept private employment or render services for private interests when such employment or services are incompatible with the proper discharge of their official duties or would impair, or reasonably give the perception of impairing, their independence, judgment or action in the performance of their duties; or in which the individual has an advantage derived from their membership/employment with the IFSAC or puts the employee in competition with services provided by the IFSAC.
- b) **Gifts and Favors:** No member of IFSAC shall show favoritism or bias toward any vendor, contractor, or others who do business with the IFSAC. Members of IFSAC are prohibited from accepting gifts or favors from any vendor, contractor or others doing business with the IFSAC that would tend to influence them in the proper discharge of their official duties or where it may be perceived to be in exchange for special treatment. Members shall serve in a manner as to not receive undue personal gain from the performance of their official duties as IFSAC representatives.



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- c) Representing Private Interests before IFSAC's Interest:** No member of IFSAC shall appear on behalf of private interests before any committee or structure of IFSAC without the consent of the Council of Governors.
- i)** No member or employee shall represent private interests in any action or proceeding against the interests of the IFSAC or in any litigation to which the IFSAC is party.
- d) Contracts with IFSAC:** No member of the IFSAC shall have any interest, direct or indirect, in any legal IFSAC contract issued by them.
- 8) Professional Standards:** Institutions/members shall demonstrate mutually, the highest standards of personal integrity, truthfulness, honesty, before, during, and after a site visit, to enhance both the degree and certificate level fire service programs internationally.
- 9) Consultants:** Institutions/members shall avoid any interest or activity which is in conflict with the conduct of the site team's official duties as IFSAC representatives, such as requesting them to serve as consultants prior to a site visit or discussing or accepting positions of employment with the entity prior to a final decision on accreditation.
- 10) Information and Assessment:** Institutions/entities shall present their self-study information in a manner that allows the site team to determine that the institution is administering its program in a fair and equitable manner.
- 11) Courtesy and Respect:** Institutions/members will treat each other with mutual respect, concern, courtesy, and responsiveness, recognizing that the improved service of an institution's /entities degree and certificate program is more important than infliction of undue pressure and argument to achieve accreditation. Unresolved issues and differences in opinion shall be dealt with in a civil and courteous manner.
- 12) Attitude and Communication:** Institutions/members shall approach the site visit process with a positive attitude and constructively support open channels of communication, creativity, dedication, and compassion when conducting/undergoing a site visit.
- 13) IFSAC Bylaws and Criteria for Accreditation:** Institutions/members shall respect, support, study, and when necessary work to improve IFSAC bylaws and criteria for accreditation for improved quality and efficiency in the institution/entity and constituency it serves.

Reporting Breaches of this Code

Procedures

Preamble:



Members of IFSAC and staff must act in accordance with the Code. If there are questions about the appropriate application of the Code to any situation, members and staff are to consult with the chair of the Ethics Committee.

Responsibilities

Members of IFSAC and staff are responsible for:

- 1) Signing a document acknowledging receipt of the Code;
- 2) Reading and complying with the Code;
- 3) Requesting clarification about any potential violation of the Code, including conflict of interest, and obtaining approval from the appropriate body;
- 4) Disclosure is important:
 - a) When a conflict of interest arises during an official discussion, the person in conflict shall immediately disclose the conflict to the body;
 - b) A member or staff shall, when practical, disclose in writing to the Ethics Committee any current personal, business, commercial or financial interest, which may result in a violation of the code or a conflict of interest.
- 5) Reporting suspected violations of the code to the Ethics Committee; and
- 6) Cooperate with those performing an investigation.

Staff is additionally responsible for:

- 1) Assisting members and staff in the administration, interpretation, and application of the code; and
- 2) Reporting any alleged violations of the code to the chairperson of the Ethics Committee.

Ethics Committee is responsible for:

- 1) Ensuring that each member receives and acknowledges receipt, in writing, of a copy of the code;
- 2) Interpreting and clarifying the code as needed.

Concluding Summary

Every member and staff are responsible to report perceived unethical conduct or potential violations. All reports will be handled in accordance with the process outlined in Article two of the Code of Conduct.



Process for Filing, Investigating, and Hearing an Inquiry or Complaint

Preface

The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress's Code of Conduct provides guidance to its membership regarding the process to file an inquiry or complaint. It is incumbent on all members to exercise the highest standard of professionalism and personal conduct, and to serve the interests of IFSAC and the fire service. This document provides the necessary direction for the Congress to receive, investigate, establish findings, and make recommendations with regard to an inquiry or complaint. It is important that we maintain consistency and ensure fairness at all times during this process. Any questions arising from policy regarding the processing of an inquiry or complaint should be directed to the chair of the Ethics Committee.

Confidentiality

It is very important that confidentiality be maintained throughout the investigation and disciplinary proceeding. Information regarding allegations and potential hearings should not be discussed with, disseminated to, anyone, except to the extent necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and hearing. The investigation must be conducted in a manner that will protect the rights of the parties involved. In the event that the inquiry or complaint is dismissed, any documentation or information regarding the investigation and/or hearing will remain confidential and no information regarding the matter will be made public. If any discipline is imposed, such discipline is a matter of public record. The decision will be kept on file and the Congress will be notified of the disciplinary action. Records dealing with an inquiry or complaint will be maintained according to Oklahoma State University's confidentiality policies.

Filing a Code of Conduct Inquiry

At any point, a member or an entity may file an inquiry with reference to the interpretation of the IFSAC Code of Conduct. All inquiries are to be submitted in writing to the chair of either assembly. The chair will forward the inquiry to the chair of the Ethics Committee. The inquiry will be placed on the agenda under new business at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Ethics Committee. The committee will discuss all inquiries during an executive session. Following the executive session, the outcome is discussed, and the committee chair provides notification to all parties involved regarding the findings.

Filing a Code of Conduct Complaint

Any member or entity may file a complaint relating to unethical conduct. All complaints must be in writing and addressed to the chair of either assembly. The complainant shall fill out the complaint form, Attachment A, Part I, and will provide all information and documentation available to the complainant. The assembly chairs shall then discuss the information listed in the complaint to determine whether an informal solution exists. If an informal solution is



determined, the chairs shall inform both the complainant and defendant of the decision, complete Part II of the form and submit it to IFSAC Administration.

If an informal solution is not found agreed upon by all parties, the chairs shall appoint an investigator and a hearing panel. Both parties involved in the complaint shall be notified of the action taken by the chairs. Any complaint against an assembly chair will be handled by the other assembly chair.

Assignment of the Investigator and Hearing Panel

The investigator comes from the membership, staff, or outside the Congress. The hearing panel shall consist of three members of the Congress appointed by the chairs of the assemblies. The assembly chair(s) shall appoint one of the hearing panel members to the position of chair. The hearing panel shall be convened after the investigator has completed the investigation and reported the findings in fact to the assembly chair(s).

The Investigation Process

A member or entity who is accused of a Code of Conduct violation is entitled to notification and to a fair investigation and hearing. Notification is provided by the assembly chairs. The investigator is responsible for fact-finding. The assembly chair(s) shall provide all material to the investigator. The investigator will report to the hearing panel with his/her findings.

The Hearing Panel

The hearing panel is responsible to review all the findings in fact and listen to evidence provided by the investigator, the complainant, the defendant, and any witnesses. The panel is to apply the evidence in determining whether there was a breach of the Code of Conduct.

The Decision of the Hearing Panel

A decision must be made by the hearing panel and reported to the assembly chairs on Part III of the complaint form. If the panel determines that no violations exist, the assembly chairs will notify the parties involved that no violations were found. If the panel determines that disciplinary action is warranted, they will report to the assembly chairs a prescribed course of action. The assembly chairs will notify the accused of the decision then sign Part III of the complaint form and submit it to IFSAC Administration.

Disciplinary Action

The hearing panel will rule on the complaint. This ruling will include what disciplinary action will be imposed. A written report of the results of the hearing, including a complete explanation of the issue, evidence, and testimony, along with the panel's action, will be submitted to the chairs of the assemblies. The hearing panel's final decision shall become effective immediately after it is made.



Disciplinary actions may include:

- 1) Remedial action such as additional education dealing with IFSAC Code of Conduct.
- 2) A warning (verbal).
- 3) Censure (written reprimand to member and representative).
- 4) Suspension* of:
 - a) the entity's membership, which is the removal from the Congress for a specified period of time. This disciplinary action would only be disposed if it was determined that the entity, as a whole, ethically violated the code of conduct.
 - b) a member, which is the removal of being directly involved in IFSAC activities for a specified period of time.

*Generally, the suspension should be for a period of time equal to or greater than six months, but in no event should the time period be more than two years.
- 5) Interim suspension of a member or an entity's membership from the Congress pending imposition of final discipline. Interim suspension is the temporary suspension, which includes:
 - a) suspension upon being found culpable of a serious crime or,
 - b) suspension when the member's continuing conduct is or is likely to cause immediate and serious harm to the Congress.
- 6) Termination of membership, which ends the representative and/or entity's status as a member. No application for readmission to the Congress will be considered for two years from the effective date of termination.

Appeals Process

Once the respondent receives the final decision of the hearing panel, the respondent may appeal the decision. To appeal, the respondent must submit a written appeal including all pertinent facts and/or materials related to the case, within fifteen (15) calendar days of receiving the hearing panel's decision. Written appeals must be submitted by registered mail (post marked) to IFSAC Administration. The Administration shall contact the chairs of the assemblies and provide the appeal and all other pertinent information. On receipt of this information, the chairs have thirty (30) days to render a final decision. This will be done through registered mail.



Retention of Records

Records of all investigations are kept indefinitely. The records shall be in the care and control of the IFSAC Administration. All records are confidential in nature and shall be treated as such. Access to the records shall be for a defined purpose and will be granted to assembly chairs through written request. Additional access is governed by Oklahoma State University policy.



Attachment A – Code of Conduct Complaint Form

PART I – To be completed by the complainant

Date of Complaint	
Chair of Assembly	Name of Assembly
Name of Complainant or Entity	Entity Represented
Name of Accused	Entity Represented
Nature of Complaint (use attachment if necessary)	
What sections of the Code of Conduct do you feel the member or entity may have violated? (Provide Specific Reasons)	
How did you learn of the member's or entity's conduct?	
Printed Name of the Complainant	
Complainant Signature	Date



PART II – To be completed by the assembly chair(s)

Informal Solution (use attachment if necessary)	
Printed Name of the Certificate Assembly Chair*	
Signature of Certificate Assembly Chair*	Date
Printed Name of the Degree Assembly Chair*	
Signature of Degree Assembly Chair*	Date

*** If the complaint is against an assembly chair, then only the name and signature of the other assembly chair is obtained.**



PART III – To be completed by hearing panel

Decision of the Hearing Panel (use attachment if necessary)	
Printed Name of the Certificate Assembly Chair*	
Signature of Certificate Assembly Chair*	Date
Printed Name of the Degree Assembly Chair*	
Signature of Degree Assembly Chair*	Date

Required Attachments: Any fact-finding documents obtained during the investigative process and written reports created by the investigator and/or hearing panel shall be attached.

* If the complaint is against an assembly chair, then only the name and signature of the other assembly chair is obtained.



Credits

Taken in part from the:

- Association of Government Accountants (AGA) Code of Ethics
- Corporate Housing Providers Association (CHPA) Ethics Grievance Policies
- American Psychological Association (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct