

Ethics, Climate Change, and the Role of the Surveyor

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SUMMARY

History has shown that surveyors have typically been held in high regard within their communities and within professional environments. The reputation achieved by the surveying profession is mainly due to the ethical standards set by the practitioners and the clients they serve. These implied standards have become the basis of published guidelines for ethics and professional conduct for surveying organizations around the world. A good example of a published guide is the FIG Publication No. 17, “Statement of Ethical Principles and Model Code of Professional Conduct” and contains important values and ideologies for conduct becoming a professional surveyor.

Also important is the realization that our physical world is changing. Studies performed by scientists worldwide have factually determined our climate is warmer, the polar ice caps are shrinking, and our seas are rising. Deforestation and increased urbanization are also factoring in the change of our climate. Greenhouse gases caused by our dependency on petroleum is also adding to the change by affecting atmospheric conditions. Research and technology have provided evidence of climate change and steps must be taken to mitigate the damage.

In 2015, the United Nations gathered in Paris bringing together national leaders to discuss the current climate situation. Over several weeks, this group began the framework of a pact unifying the processes necessary to mitigate and/or reverse the ongoing damage of climate change. Because of the nature of the changes needed to minimize future damage, the conversations that took place during this historic summit were difficult. The summit ended with the introduction of the Paris Agreement, a historic accord to begin the process of healing our world. We must honor this endeavor and see the necessary changes are made for survival.

Surveyors carry with them the responsibility to use their skills with the utmost ethical and

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professional standards. As our world is changing, the surveyor is tasked with measuring those changes with an unbiased opinion of the information they are collecting. Because much of the information gathered by the surveyor is environmentally based, it is imperative that this information is of the highest quality and provides a true depiction of the area's conditions.

Climate change will require environmental and habitual changes from our societies and cultures but establishing the current and evolving conditions must be the responsibility of the surveyor. Our ethical past and high moral code provide the best guide for the job at hand.

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