



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

## **Do Engineers Have a Right to Protest Shoddy Work and Cost Overruns? (adapted from NSPE Case No. 82-5)**

Year

1999

Description

This is an open-ended scenario for discussion based on a case from the NSPE Board of Ethical Review. It describes a situation in which an engineer employed by a government contractor objects to a subcontractor's poor performance and is ignored and silenced by management.

Body

Kim is an engineer who works for a large defense contractor. Part of Kim's job requires reviewing the work of subcontractors the company employs. Kim discovers that certain subcontractors have made submissions with excessive costs, time delays, or substandard work. He advises management to reject these jobs and require the subcontractors to correct the problems.

After an extended period of disagreement with Kim over the issues, management places a warning in Kim's personnel file and places Kim on three months' probation, with a warning about possible future termination. Kim believes that his company has an obligation #1) to ensure that subcontractors produce acceptable work, and #2) cut unnecessary costs to the government. Finally, Kim requests an opinion on the matter from the NSPE Board of Ethical Review.

Does Kim have a right to protest shoddy work and cost overruns? Does Kim have an obligation to do so? Is it appropriate for Kim to approach the NSPE Board of Ethical Review for an opinion?

[NSPE Code of Ethics](#) An earlier version may have been used in this case.

Notes

See the original NSPE case at: [Whistleblowing - Case No. 82-5](#).

Rights

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