How Ethical Are You?

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

1. Recognize types of ethics
2. What do we expect of ourselves?
3. How do you ensure ethical behavior?
4. What does ethics mean to you as a public safety officer?
Ethics exists in different shapes and sizes in today’s society. There is business ethics, computer ethics, corporate ethics, education ethics, EMS ethics, end-of-life ethics, environmental ethics, firefighter ethics, government ethics, Internet ethics, police ethics, and workplace ethics. For a good example; Lockheed Martin has an ethics program that is considered a good corporate model. They have mandatory ethics awareness training for all of their 100,000 employees each year. They state that ethics is the essence of their business, do what’s right, respect others, and perform with excellence. They believe that setting the standard is expected of all employees, directors, and consultants to participate in this ethics awareness training. Interesting to note, it is also a condition of continued employment with Lockheed Martin. For a bad example; Royal Caribbean Cruises has claimed that it’s an environmentally responsible company. However, their actual conduct couldn’t be further from the truth. The company was fined $18 million in fines and assessed an additional $9 million for dumping wastewater and hazardous chemicals at sea and in ports. Their motto was “Save the Waves” during the same timeframe of the illegal dumping.

How do you interpret ethical? Gaming such as casinos or even games that we play at home such as Monopoly, include rules and ethics. Let’s discuss medical ethics. Medical ethics is primarily the study of moral values and judgments as they apply to medicine. In 2004, the State of California passed a controversial bond measure (Proposition 71) that authorizes the state to sell $3 billion in bonds and then dispense nearly $300 million a year for ten years to researchers for human embryonic stem-cell experiments, including cloning projects intended solely for research purposes. It bans the funding of cloning to create babies. This measure pitted scientists, sympathetic patients who could benefit from stem cells, and biotechnology interests against the Roman Catholic Church and conservatives opposed to the research because it involves destroying days-old embryos and cloning. Many scientists believe stem cells hold vast promise for treating an array of diseases from diabetes to Parkinson’s and Alzheimer’s. There are public health policy ethics that includes pandemic influenza. In 2004, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) created a panel of ethicists for the first time in history to help it deal with the life and death questions of who should receive flu vaccine after a major shortage of the vaccine occurred. Then, five years later the CDC’s Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) met on July 29, 2009, to consider who should receive 2009 H1N1 vaccine. The CDC was concerned that the new
H1N1 virus could result in a particular severe 2009–2010 flu season. The recommendation considered several factors including current disease pattern and populations most at risk for severe illness based on current trends in illness. In order, the groups recommended were: pregnant women; caregivers for children younger than 6 months of age; healthcare and emergency medical services personnel; children from 6 months through 18 years of age; young adults 19 through 24 years of age; and persons aged 25 through 64 years who have health conditions associated with higher risk of medical complications from influenza.3

On October 29, 2009, the government website (www.flu.gov) stated that “More than half of the hospitalizations from 2009 H1N1 flu reported by twenty-seven states from September 1st and October 10th were people age twenty-four and younger. About 23 percent of the deaths reported from twenty-eight states during this period were in this age group. In addition, about 90 percent of the hospitalizations and deaths from the 2009 H1N1 flu are in people age sixty-four and younger. “As of October 14, 2009, 5,885,900 doses of H1N1 vaccine doses were shipped; 836,900 doses were shipped to California.”4 The Science Daily from October 4, 2009, reported the release of nine papers from the University of Toronto Joint Centre for Bioethics for public discussion involving the anticipated onset of a second wave of the H1N1 influenza pandemic. Topics included duty of healthcare workers to work during a serious flu pandemic, how to allocate limited medical resources, and the obligation of rich countries to share such resources with those less fortunate. “Now is the time to think through the serious ethical challenges societies may confront, not in the midst of crisis with line-ups at hospital doors. These issues and concerns, drawn largely from a Canadian point of view, have relevance to countries everywhere.”5 The Joint Centre for Bioethics papers stated a major pandemic will demand difficult ethical choices related to ventilators, vaccines, antiviral, and other resources. For example, who should get the first vaccine? Who should receive the last vaccine? Which patient will receive the last ventilator?

In 2009, President Barack Obama declared the H1N1 outbreak a national emergency. This enabled his health chief to move emergency departments offsite to speed treatment and protect patients who were not infected. At this time, forty-six states reported having widespread flu activity.

Some hospitals opened drive-thrus and drive-up tent clinics to screen, treat, or vaccinate H1N1 patients.6 The goal was to keep infected people out of regular emergency departments and away from other sick patients. Other people waited in line for hours throughout the country to receive the vaccination.

There are other medical ethical situations as well. Difficult ethical dilemmas exist in the case of assisted suicide. In the 1990s, Dr. Jack Kevorkian claimed to have provided lethal drugs to 130 terminally ill patients. Many people call his work “murder” or “assisted suicide.” On the other hand, many people believe that these drugs allow for “death with dignity.”7 Our society allows for the legal euthanasia of our pets when they are terminally ill or severely injured. Webster’ New World Dictionary defines euthanasia as a “painless death to end suffering.” Some people feel that Kevorkian was “playing God.” After a televised assisted suicide in 1999, Kevorkian was convicted of second-degree murder and sentenced to ten to twenty-five years in prison. According to Kevorkian, “Planned death is a rational system that honors self-determination and extracts from a purposeful, unavoidable death
the maximum benefit for the subject, the subject’s next of kin, and for all of humanity.”8 Medicide: The Goodness of Planned Death,” Free Inquiry (Fall 1991), p. 15

The World Wide Web has embraced Internet ethics, or the lack of. In Chapter 8, we will discuss computer ethics and technology that has affected us in ways that you might not have thought about.

WHAT DO WE EXPECT OF OURSELVES?

Many of our ethical and moral dilemmas are “every day” decisions, which, by the way, start when you wake up in the morning. For example, you’re standing in line at your favorite coffee house before work. The person in front of you reaches into their pocket and pulls out some money. A minute later you notice a bill on the floor. So, you pick it up and notice it’s a twenty-dollar bill. What would you do? I believe most people would ask that person in line if they dropped this money. They would return the money no matter what denomination it is. But there are those that would say, “easy come, easy go,” as the saying goes. There would be some sort of justification in their mind that they did not see the money fall from the person’s pocket and you really don’t know who it belongs to. Another example, you’re now in your car driving to work and it took longer to get that coffee. You’re late and running into some additional traffic and red lights. The clock is ticking and the boss, again, will not be happy if you’re late. Light turns yellow, you accelerate to move through the traffic light, which by the way turns red before you enter the intersection. You guessed it, there is an accident and you have just hit someone. You know you are in the wrong by running a red light, that’s against the law. But did you do anything wrong according to ethical and moral principles? Is it only when we hurt someone that makes it a bad ethical decision? It was only a fender bender; no one was hurt and then perhaps it was only bad luck. I didn’t get away with it this time. Most of us, as in the preceding examples, have run through a yellow light and even perhaps a red light. The critical thinking process of ethical and moral principles would then teach us to know in advance the probability of getting into an accident. The ramifications of that one-second decision, the chance that it’s only a fender bender, or more seriously the possibility of a deadly accident, should be considered well in advance. Ethics takes critical thinking to the next step by examining our behavior and taking responsibility for our actions.

We could also ask ourselves about drinking and driving under the influence. Public safety officers see firsthand the end result of this serious problem. This process of critical thinking of ethical and moral principles is not something we do consciously on a regular basis, or is it? Can we learn and train ourselves to critique our situations in advance? Many primary schools today do not teach this thought process of critical thinking. However, you can take a class today in college on critical thinking for English, how to read between the lines. In today’s society and media, ethical and moral principles can get lost easily. Pick your favorite movies; they depict those public safety officers acting and behaving as heroes or then again maybe not. Firefighters running into burning buildings without full protective equipment and turnouts not secured. Police officers racing into a bank robbery with guns drawn and firing away as if they were in the old West. We as firefighters and police officers enjoy the entertainment, but we also must remember the public
watching this movie really believes that this is our daily routine. The public does not know about our daily, and sometimes mundane, routines. Their only perception about public safety officers and their jobs could very well be associated with movies and TV shows.

So I ask, what do we expect of ourselves? As a public safety officer we should know better than to take such a chance and risk an injury or accident. Remember, safety, safety, safety.

**HOW DO YOU ENSURE ETHICAL BEHAVIOR**

According to the report, January 24, 2010 officers arrived to the scene at around 1:15 a.m., twelve minutes after the reporting party called 911 saying, “I set the house on fire with the thing from my nose.” The 74-year-old gave her address and the line went dead. Her reference was to an oxygen machine she used when she slept. This was used to help with her chronic obstructed pulmonary disease (COPD). Fire officers reported they found no signs of a fire when they first arrived. They drove around the cul-de-sac, slowly, but no one exited the engine or walked up the driveway to investigate further. Two firefighters, however, did get out of the apparatus to help spot while backing. Five hours later, after a neighbor called 911, firefighters returned and the home was completely engulfed in flames. The body of the victim, seventy-four, was discovered in the garage of her burned-out home. Multiple firefighters have been placed on leave in connection with this deadly house fire. Dunwoody, Georgia, is a northern suburb of Atlanta and incorporated as a city December 1, 2008. In the report, DeKalb officials said “The officers on the scene did not establish command and they didn’t follow department policy.”

The Dunwoody police have opened a criminal investigation into the fatal fire, with the help of the DeKalb county district attorney’s office. The victim’s family believes she would still be alive had firefighters done their job and they also would like individual apologies from the firefighters involved.

Here is a sad example of public safety officers not doing their job. If only one firefighter or police officer had knocked on the door to talk to the reporting party, this fatal fire may not have happened. One apparatus operator, two Captains, and two Battalion Chiefs were terminated after the investigation. Reason, officers on the scene did not establish command and follow department policy. There was a higher court ruling on January 9, 2012; the Georgia Supreme Court ruled to reinstate one of the Captains. There are serious ramifications, legally, that affect our job as public safety officers. If we do not do our job someone may get hurt, or worse, may die.

One daydream most all of us have had is to be a hero of some sort. We have many pretenses of who a hero is. We think of many popular images, such as a comic book hero like Superman, Spiderman, perhaps a firefighter, a policeman, a soldier, or an astronaut. But is there more to heroes than that?

The definition of a hero according to Encarta Dictionary is a main character in a fictional plot; man with super human powers; somebody admired; and a remarkably brave person.

Most of us remember or have read about the explosion of the space shuttle Challenger. On January 28, 1986, at 11:38:00 a.m. EST, the Challenger lifted off.
An explosion seventy-three seconds after liftoff claimed the entire crew and shuttle. The cause of the explosion was determined to be an o-ring failure in the right solid rocket booster. Cold weather was determined to be a contributing factor.\textsuperscript{14}

On that day in 1986, President Ronald Reagan had planned to report on the state of the Union but he said the events of earlier today have led me to change those plans. Today is a day for mourning and remembering. . . . And I want to say something to the schoolchildren of America who were watching the live coverage of the shuttle’s takeoff. I know it is hard to understand, but sometimes painful things happen like this. It’s all part of the process of exploration and discovery. It’s all part of taking a chance and expanding man’s horizons. The future doesn’t belong to the fainthearted; it belongs to the brave. The \textit{Challenger} crew was pulling us into the future, and we’ll continue to follow them.

President Reagan went on to say that “the crew of the space shuttle \textit{Challenger} honored us by the manner in which they lived their lives. We will never forget them, nor the last time we saw them, this morning, as they prepared for their journey and waved goodbye and ‘slipped the surly bonds of earth’ to touch the face of God”.\textsuperscript{15} Many people believe the \textit{Challenger} crew were heroes.

Are heroes born or do they have a choice? If heroes are not born, who or what makes them? Some heroes are fictional and some are real life. Surely Mother Teresa and Mahatma Ghandi would be regarded as heroes. Most people agree that a hero displays emotional and physical courage or behave in an ethical and moral way. Celebrities are different than heroes. A celebrity is a celebrity because he or she is famous for being well known.

Many people dream of being a firefighter or a police officer. Children dress up in costume as firefighters and police officers. Many people feel firefighters and police officers are heroes. Especially after the tragic events at the Twin Towers on 9/11, most people believed firefighters, police officers, and EMS were heroes because they gave their lives protecting the public and those in need. They are exposed to events and situations far beyond the average person’s experience on a daily basis. But aren’t firefighters, for instance, supposed to rush into burning buildings? Isn’t that their job? Is it not the job of the police officer to draw his weapon and shoot at the bad guys to protect the innocent? What about the “ordinary” mother who, without thinking, rushes back into a smoke-filled apartment in an attempt to save a child? Isn’t she a hero as well? The ability to leap tall buildings in a single bound or to run faster than a speeding bullet is the definition of Superman, or a TV show with the title \textit{Heroes}. Is that what the public thinks about public safety officers? Is that what public safety officers think of themselves? I certainly hope not on either account. I believe that firefighters, police officers and EMT/paramedics choose this profession because they truly want to help. They like the idea of making a contribution to society in a positive way to help their fellow man. They like the idea of a dynamic workplace, challenging, always different, and ever-changing.

From the website, www.imahero.com, you can see how people vote for their favorite heroes.

Timothy: A firefighter and loving brother.

My Aunt: She fights in the Navy.
My parents: Because they are loving and caring. They keep a roof over my head and food in my stomach. They’re my heroes!!

My Mom: She is my hero because she never gives up on me.

Do you have a hero? If so, who is your hero, and why? Who do you think is deserving of the title, hero?

The public often thinks of firefighters and police officers as heroes. The 2001 annual CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll ranking of the honesty and ethics of professions reflects this respect; firefighters rank first among people of different professions for their honesty and integrity, with 90 percent of Americans rating them “high” or “very high” on these characteristics. Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States, firefighters and other rescue personnel have been widely praised for their heroics as they risked their lives to save others. Nurses and the U.S. military rated close behind in the ratings. This is the only year firefighters were included in this Gallup Poll.

The police experienced an improvement in their ratings. In 1995, the year of the O. J. Simpson trial, only 41 percent gave the police a high rating. In 2001, 68 percent of Americans gave the police high ratings on their honesty and ethics. The lowest rating at the end of the scale was given to car salesmen.16

November 26–27, 2001

Please tell me how you would rate the honesty and ethical standards of people in these different fields: very high, high, average, low or very low?

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<th>Percentage Saying “Very High” or “High”</th>
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<td><strong>Firefighters</strong></td>
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How Ethical Are You?

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<td>Stockbrokers</td>
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<td>Lawyers</td>
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<td>Advertising practitioners</td>
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From Firefighters Top Gallup’s “Honesty and Ethics” List, December 1, 2001, by David W. Moore. Copyright © 2001 Gallup, Inc. All rights reserved. The content is used with permission; however, Gallup retains all rights of republication.

WHAT THE PUBLIC THINKS OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS

We all remember what we were doing on 9/11. Hundreds of firefighters, emergency medical personnel, and police rushed into the World Trade Center on that day to never to be seen alive again. These men and women were not forced to put their lives at risk; they were practicing what they had been trained to do as professionals. And in doing so they reminded us of the most distinguishing feature of the professions, namely altruism, the commitment to put the well-being of others ahead of their own.

So it should not come as a surprise that when firefighters and police behave in an unethical way that the public is then sometimes quick to judge because they are disappointed. Public safety officers are not supposed to do bad things. We trust them, as the public would say. What happened to their hero? What happened to those we trust—those who save us, help us, and protect us? Public safety is public service. You are on stage, on the job and off, publicly, and in your private life. Your neighbor knows who you are and what you do. The public is paying our salaries. They, at times, believe we get paid too much, especially for making bad ethical decisions.

In response to the alleged “using the Internet to exchange child pornography” charges against a thirty-year veteran fire captain, his department said in a news statement that they were “deeply saddened” that one of their employees had been arrested. This thirty-year veteran of the fire department was placed on administrative leave and subsequently retired when police started their child sexual exploitation investigation.17

Then, the youngest firefighter ever to be promoted to captain in his department, recipient of the medal of valor, and 9/11 rescuer, is one who we would never expect to plead guilty to possessing images of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct. His attorney stated that “9/11 had such a traumatic experience on him that experts believe it created a circumstance that these events happened when he had too much to drink.” He has accepted responsibility and has paid a heavy price.”18

Unfortunately, emergency work can take a tragic toll on first responders. In New York, three firefighters who helped rescue 9/11 victims killed themselves within a year. In Oklahoma City, a police sergeant, who rescued victims at the federal building bombing, committed suicide.
There have been other such situations that have profound and lasting impact. In 1987, Baby Jessica became wedged in a pipe twenty-two feet down and eight to fourteen inches wide. Rescuers piped fresh air and heat down to her while they labored to rescue her. Scores of rescuers drilled a parallel tunnel and connecting shaft through solid rock to rescue her. A vital part of the rescue was the use of the then relatively new technology of waterjet cutting. When she was finally pulled out, she was filthy but alert, wrapped in gauze, and strapped to a backboard. Rescuers cheered and there was even a White House Reception with President George H. W. Bush and First Lady Barbara Bush. She had become “Everybody’s Baby,” the title of an ABC TV movie about her rescue. The photograph of her being rescued taken by Scott Shaw of the *Odessa American* won the 1988 Pulitzer Prize for spot news photography. The footage of Jessica being rescued is shown in Michael Jackson’s music video *Man in the Mirror*.

Ten years later, a Pew Research Center project showed that only the death of Princess Diana drew more worldwide media coverage than Jessica’s rescue. In May 2007, the staff of *USA Today* placed Jessica twenty-second on a list of the twenty-five people who have had the most impact on our lives during the past quarter century. During that time the only other media coverage that drew more interest was the coverage of Rodney King, the crash of TWA Flight 800, the Columbine High School shootings, and the end of the first Gulf War.

Donations for her poured in after her rescue. The money, estimated at the time to be between $700,000 and $1 million dollars, was put into a trust fund that she will be able to access when she is twenty-five. She said she intends to sign the fund over to her son, Simon. Jessica has a visible diagonal scar on her forehead. It marks where her forehead had been rubbed raw against the well casing during the almost three days she was trapped. She endured fifteen surgeries in the years after the incident to repair injuries she suffered. Her small toe and part of her right foot had to be removed because gangrene had set in where circulation had been cut off. She has scars on her thighs from where skin was harvested for grafts. In high school, she was diagnosed with juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. In March of 2011, Baby Jessica turned twenty-five and gained access to her trust fund which was valued around $800,000. She is now a contented stay-at-home mother of two and lives less than two miles from the site of the 1987 rescue. According to her father, she has no memory of being wedged in the pipe or the fifteen operations that followed.

In 1995, a paramedic and rescuer, who squeezed into the passageway and slathered a frightened Baby Jessica in petroleum jelly before sliding her out into the bright TV lights, shot and killed himself at his parents’ ranch outside Midland. His brother said his life “fell apart” because of the stress of the rescue, the attention it created, and the anticlimactic return to everyday life.

In 2004, a former Midland police officer who helped in the rescue was sentenced to fifteen years in federal prison on charges of sexual exploitation of a child and improper storage of explosives. A year later, he was sentenced to twenty years on two state charges of sexual assault.

The police officer, firefighter, and EMT/paramedic are expected to perform under these situations of putting a complete stranger’s well-being first. This is our job, our training, and our expectations, both of ourselves and the public’s.
According to an October 16, 2009, article in the *Sacramento Bee*, a retired Sacramento County veteran lieutenant pled guilty to possession of hundreds of images of child pornography found on his home computer. He was charged with possession of items depicting minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct and entered a plea agreement in which he agreed to plead guilty; court documents state. Agents found more than six hundred images on computer hard drives.21

The ethical behavior of public officials is critical to the performance of public agencies. Police officers, regularly and without warning, confront important value choices. The demands of the job may be in itself too much for some officers. Facing danger constantly, having unusual hours and sleep habits, and being continually surrounded by criminals may be too much stress, particularly when experienced over a period of several years.22 Firefighters and EMT/paramedics are exposed to the same situations. They work twenty-four to ninety-six hours straight before they can go home to their families. The stresses of the public safety officers are a constant reminder of the daily job.

Police officers and firefighters have a higher divorce rate than the national average. According to Police-Dynamics.com, studies consistently show that the police profession has a divorce rate 60 to 70 percent higher than the national average; the alcoholism rate is two times the national average; the domestic violence rate is among the highest of all professions; and the suicide rate is three times the national average.23 As discussed previously, they are facing danger, are under stress, and have unusual sleep habits.

In 2008, Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia, produced the movie *Fireproof*. The film has both a marriage-saving message and a Christian message. In the movie, firefighter Caleb Holt lives by the firefighter’s credo: “Never leave your partner behind.” He saves a victim from a burning building, and he states “I am a hero to everybody—except my wife.” Because firefighters divorce at a rate of 70 percent, firemen and spouses were invited by churches to come see the movie for free. *Fireproof* was more than a movie. It is being used to strengthen marriages. To help save a marriage, go to www.fireproofthemovie.com.24

After digesting all of that, you may be asking, why would I put myself and my family through all of that negative stuff? To expose myself to the public safety officer’s stresses and adrenalin rushes; to be held to higher standards than other professions; and to fall farther than other professions when we make a mistake or when we make poor ethical and moral decisions. We believe that most, if not all, public safety officers feel that it is a privilege to serve the public and to be held accountable for their actions. We are compelled and driven to do good work. The competition is challenging and tough. For every one person hired, there may have been one hundred qualified applicants. To finally be able to submit a resume that represents the high level of standards required to get the job takes many years of education, volunteer work, community service, and experience. I ask my students every semester: Who do you want to respond to a call for your loved ones? A 911 call from your parents or grandparents who expect only the best to show up and perform their job and to possibly save a life. It really does not matter whether it’s for a heart attack, a fire, or a burglary. The public expects only the best to arrive, make appropriate, quick, and ethical decisions. To protect us, to save us, and to be their hero for that few moments in time.
WHEN PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS ADVERSELY DISAGREE IN PUBLIC

On the evening of February 5, 2014, Chula Vista firefighters responded to an unfortunate rollover accident on Interstate 805 in Chula Vista, California. During patient care, a CHP Officer instructed a fire engineer to move the fire engine from the center divider (where it was protecting the ambulance, firefighters and patients). There were conflicting reports, however, the end result was that a fire engineer on scene while providing patient care was arrested and placed in the back of a CHP vehicle for a reported 30 minutes.

Many videos and news articles appeared in different places with lots of photos and lots of opinions of what happened at the crash site with this 12 ½-year fire service veteran.

The following are just some of the headlines that followed (even internationally):

- Firefighter Responding to Crash Victims, Handcuffed by California Highway Patrol
- Must see: Firefighter Handcuffed at Crash Scene by California Highway Patrol
- Firefighter Arrested by CHP Officer During Rescue: Move Your Truck From Accident, Said Cop
- Fire, Police Chiefs Meet After Firefighter’s Arrest
- CHP Calls Chula Vista Firefighter’s Arrest At Crash Scene ‘Unfortunate Incident’

Meetings took place between the CHP and the Fire Department all in an effort to join in training so this situation wouldn’t happen again. Statements were released by the Chula Vista Fire Department stating they were proud of how the firefighters handled the situation and treating and transporting the victims to the hospital. During the initial few days after this detainment the CHP had no comment. In most instances, both fire and police are able to perform their jobs professionally with the safety and best interest for the public. This particular night the public did not see that fire and police were working together for public safety.

To no surprise, some of the public’s general comments included statements that a lot of people were thinking:

How do they act when there isn’t a camera filming? Could they both be right and wrong and acted out of ego? Isn’t saving a life a priority? The cop handled this one poorly! No winners here! This cop needs some time off to think about what is truly important. Poorly trained cops! If the police treat firefighters like this, just imagine what goes on with the police and public when there are no cameras. Why don’t you arrogant firemen take off those stupid fire hat stickers and license plates off your vehicles and quit driving like jerks? 25 tons of fire truck works better at protecting emergency responders than flares do. Settle your differences off the scene. They should have decided to have the pissing contest after the emergency was over. Aren’t public safety servants required to be professional at all times? This guy could have died and the CHP officer is still thinking about traffic laws.25

As you can plainly read here, the public is very confused, perplexed and just does not understand how firefighters and police officers can’t do their jobs
professionally. If there was a disagreement on scene, there are much better ways to handle this.

A few weeks after this incident, the fire engineer filed a lawsuit against the CHP. His intent is making policy change and he is not looking for compensation.26

It is clear there is “No Winner”. Whatever happened that evening in the middle of a freeway rescue will not be remembered for the rescue, but for the handcuffed fire engineer. This is a very poor judgment call during an emergency which has lasting ramifications. That is, we as public safety officers must remember who we work for . . . the public. When the taxpayers have negative thoughts about our professions, there is a price to pay somewhere. Like building new police and fire stations, or hiring new public safety officers. When we choose to be professionals, and resolve these differences back at the station, there would be no reason to have a black eye in the public’s eye. There have been other such instances across the country where law enforcement and firefighters adversely disagree, where a firefighter was arrested on scene. All public safety must take a hard look at the total long-term outcomes of such near-sighted actions.

**NYPD vs. FDNY Annual Charity Hockey Match Turns In to a Brawl**

Many of you have heard “New York’s Finest” and “New York’s Bravest”. What happened on Sunday, April 6, 2014 when police and firefighters played a charity hockey match and an unbelievable brawl took the stage was not the best example of our Finest and Bravest.27 It’s sad to say no one will remember the names of the charities for which these New York Departments played for, but rather the brawl that took center ice. The ice fight sent social media into hyper speed with photos and videos of the violence. Some of the videos had disclaimers because the video contained Adult Language. This all took place at Nassau Coliseum on Long Island, home of the New York Islanders NHL team and turned into a full-out fight. The only difference was the players were professional firefighters and police officers.28

The game was delayed for 25 minutes as gloves; sticks and other equipment were picked up off the ice. Several players were ejected from the game. Despite numerous black eyes and bruises, no players appeared to be seriously injured. The score was tied, 3-3. The NYPD team went on to win the game, 8-5 for their first victory over the FDNY in six years. The game benefited various charities, including the New York Police and Fire Widows’ and Children’s Benefit Fund. Both departments declined to comment after the event.29

Is there a moral to the story? How can two professional organizations act like hockey players out of control? Come on, when you call 911, who do you want to arrive on scene? Many of the spectators stated they thought they were rolling back the years in the 70’s and 80’s when bench clearing occurred at every game. The only two not fighting were clearly the goalies standing mid-ice together watching.30

This is another example of being in the public’s eye… these are our heroes, as the public often refers! There have been many comments made of this charity game, and to no surprise, certainly not favorable ones. Some say this has gone on for 40 plus years, between New York Police and Fire, boys will be boys. After all, it’s just hockey. While others say, this is a poor example of our public servants. They should lead by example, they are not professional hockey players; they are
professional firefighters and police officers. We are held to a higher standard, we
are in the public’s eye every day, on and off duty. The judgment public safety offi-
cers receive from the public is expected. We are sworn to duty, to protect life and
property, all the time.

Speaking of black eye, here are some general thoughts about this charity
hockey match between fire and police from the public: Aren’t they supposed to be
lead by example? Wild animals in different uniforms. One side the “bravest”, the
other the “finest”. Collectively, they’re both the stupidest. If I was playing a game,and someone punched me, would it not be a crime? Not acceptable.

WHAT DOES ETHICS MEAN TO YOU?

Sociologist Raymond Baumhart asked business people, “What does ethics mean to
you?” Some replies were:

“Ethics has to do with what my feelings tell me is right or wrong.”
“Ethics has to do with my religious beliefs.”
“Being ethical is doing what the law requires.”
“Ethics consists of the standards of behavior our society accepts.”
“I don’t know what the word means.”

Being ethical is also not following your feelings or following the law. Do you think
that being ethical is doing what is acceptable to society? What are some examples
of laws that have deviated from what is ethical? Unfortunately, we can look to our
own history in the United States or Nazi Germany of World War II to find unethical
and immoral practices.

Now, let’s take a look at the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. The Scouts teach
at an early age about high moral standards, community involvement, and good
citizenship.

In 2008, a tornado hit an Iowa Boy Scout camp, killing four Scouts and
injuring dozens. There were many stories of heroism, describing how older boys
shielded younger ones with their bodies and, remembering their motto when it
counted most and using their training to save lives. There were ninety-three Scouts,
ages thirteen to eighteen at the remote camp, which was out of cell phone range.
The tornado warnings issued twelve minutes previously did not reach many of the
Scouts. The tornado destroyed cabins, burying boys under the rubble. Iowa Gov-
ernor Chet Culver confirmed that “All four of the young men who were killed are
Scouts, . . . they responded as quickly as they could. Think lives were saved. They
were the real heroes of this story.” The Scouts were personally challenged, and
they performed admirably.

Both the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts teach at an early age to be true at all
times, to have a high morale code of virtues, ideals, standard of behavior, and to be
a good citizen. These are all a way of life.

A police officer that knows a fellow officer has engaged in wrongdoing must
choose between the values of friendship and loyalty to the organization and soci-
ety. Whistle-blowers are not disgruntled employees. Whistle-blowers are normal
people who have a strong conscience, are high performers committed to the formal
goals of their organization, and have a strong sense of professional responsibility.”
Police tend to find themselves in a fish bowl, or on videotape, and then have to defend actions they thought were noble or at least appropriate at the time. Most police are visible in their uniforms and in their vehicles, making their actions—both good and bad—more noticeable to the public. Police officers are exposed to temptations not often found in other vocations.34

The overall results of law enforcement organizations lacking ethical behaviors are mistrust and the loss of support. As governmental organizations, law enforcement agencies must demonstrate their ability to retain the trust of the citizens they protect. Gaining public trust requires the process of an organization and public administrators to possess trustworthy behaviors. Ethical behaviors that lead to public trust include integrity, openness, loyalty, ethical competence, and consistency. The more ethical a government is, the more public trust it gains.35 Length of service has some impact on officer attitudes and behavior. New officers with less than one year of service have high ethical awareness and standards but are reluctant to report misconduct. This is understandable considering new recruits are on probation and may not be familiar with what happens to officers who report misconduct.36

integrity: noun
quality of being honest, strong principles, uprightness, honesty, good character, righteousness, fairness, truthfulness, trustworthiness

altruistic: adjective
unselfish, selfless, compassionate, kind, public spirited, humanitarian, charitable

virtuous: adjective
righteous, good, pure, high morals, upstanding, high minded, reputable, noble,

golden rule: noun
the rule of conduct that one should behave toward others as one would have others behave toward themselves
Just as police officers, firefighters, and other emergency responders drive police vehicles, fire trucks, fire engines, and ambulances; it is not easy to blend into the public eye. After all, they’re not intended to “blend in.” They are designed to represent public safety. In Chapter 2, the Sacramento City firefighters who attended the “Porn Star Ball” with a fire engine, likewise, did not blend in. The public, rightfully so, was outraged that public funds were being spent at an event of this nature and not for an emergency call. The public asked the question, “Do these firefighters have this much time on their hands? Shouldn’t they be saving lives and fighting fires?”

JUSTIFICATION?

Some may say, it doesn’t hurt anyone; I’m just fighting fire with fire; it’s all for a good cause; everyone’s doing it, it’s okay if I don’t gain personally; I’ve got it coming. People who feel overworked or are underpaid rationalize that minor “perks” are nothing more than fair compensation for services rendered. This is also an excuse to abuse sick time, insurance claims, overtime, personal phone calls, and personal use of office supplies.

Is the action that I am considering legal? Does it violate any rules, laws, or policies? Is the action balanced? Is it fair for all concerned in the short term and in the long term? Is anyone being exploited or harmed? How will the action make me feel about myself? How would I feel if this action were made public? If it were in tomorrow’s paper? On the news? If my family found out? Can I explain it to others?

It is important to recognize that the greater the potential consequences, the greater the need for careful decision making.

1. Could you or someone else suffer physical harm?
2. Could you or someone else suffer serious emotional pain?
3. Could the decision hurt your reputation, undermine your credibility, or damage important relationships?
4. Could the decision impede the achievement of any important goal?

SUMMARY

Consider the following: to do my best, serve God and Country, help others at all times, morally straight, honest and fair, helpful, caring, courageous and strong, respect others and authority, make the world a better place. All are excellent attributes for everyone to follow, especially for public safety officers. We are in the spotlight every day, on every call, whether we are on duty or off duty. Ask yourself this question, would I or someone I love be embarrassed about this decision? Would I be proud or would I be embarrassed to see this on the front page news in the paper? We should constantly be aware of our responsibility to ourselves, our families, to our department, and to the public for whom we serve, and we should be honored to have this opportunity.
NOTES

22. J. Raines, Ethics in Policing Misconduct and Integrity (Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2010). p. 5.
33. Raines, Ethics in Policing Misconduct and Integrity. p. 3.
35. Raines, Ethics in Policing Misconduct and Integrity. p. 175.
DILEMMA

List four ethical or moral situations that you have recently experienced. Then, answer the following questions:

Dilemma #1 _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

1. Did this decision affect someone else in a negative way?
2. Did you have an opportunity to give input for a different outcome?
3. Was the outcome the best choice?
4. Would you change anything about that outcome?

Dilemma #2 _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

1. Did this decision affect someone else in a negative way?
2. Did you have an opportunity to give input for a different outcome?
3. Was the outcome the best choice?
4. Would you change anything about the outcome?
Dilemma #3 _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

1. Did this decision affect someone else in a negative way?
2. Did you have an opportunity to give input for a different outcome?
3. Was the outcome the best choice?
4. Would you change anything about that outcome?

Dilemma #4 _______________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

1. Did this decision affect someone else in a negative way?
2. Did you have an opportunity to give input for a different outcome?
3. Was the outcome the best choice?
4. Would you change anything about that outcome?