



2025 OHS Conference
15 August 2025, Cape Town



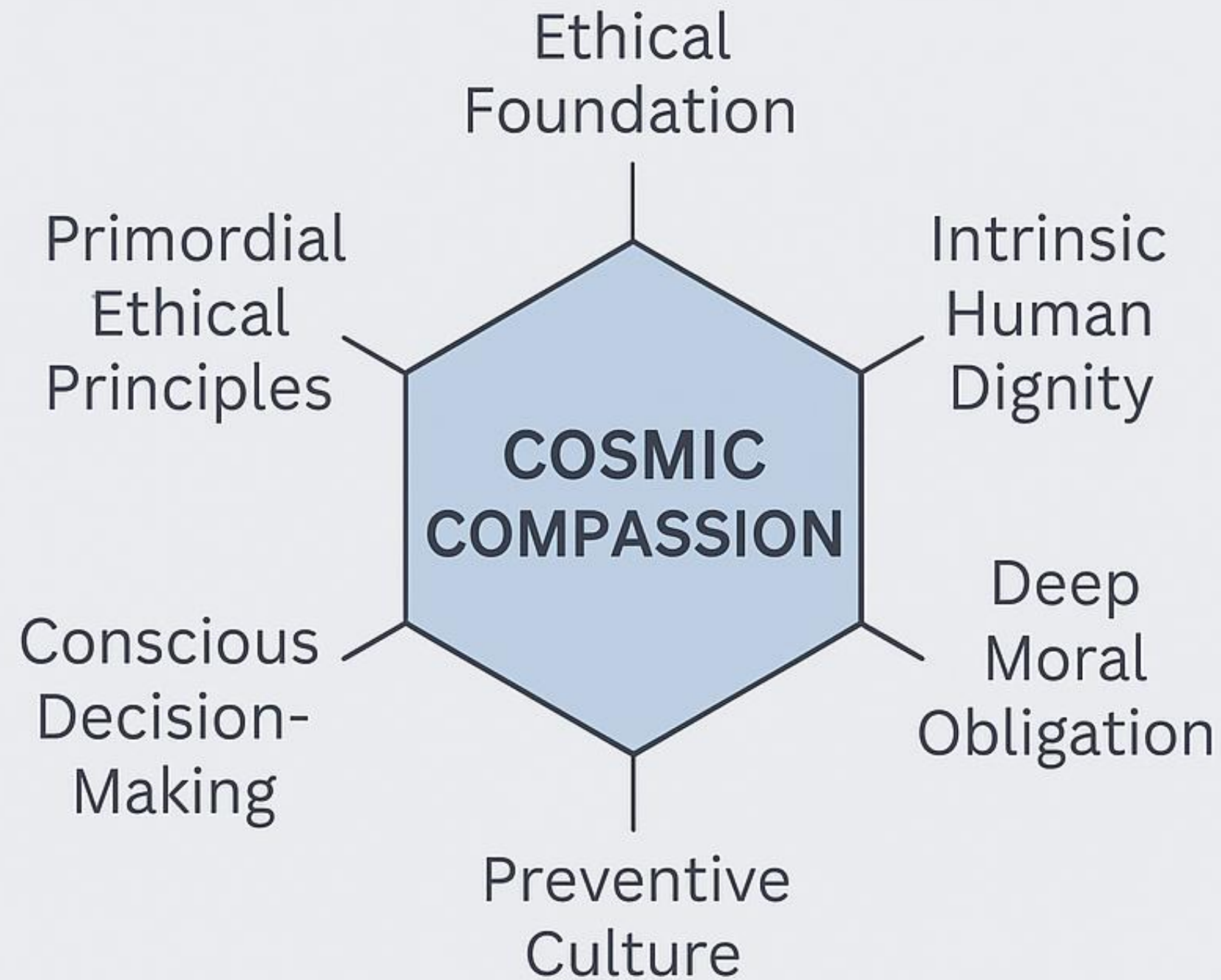
PREPARED BY:

Yaseen Francis PrCHSA | CMSaioosh | BA | MEng (Can)
Technical Director ComPrac Holdings

**Ethical Behaviour of Professionally Registered: H&S
Practitioners**

Cosmic Compassion

The Ethics of Intention



Dr Samir Mahmoud

Source Adopted & Changed:

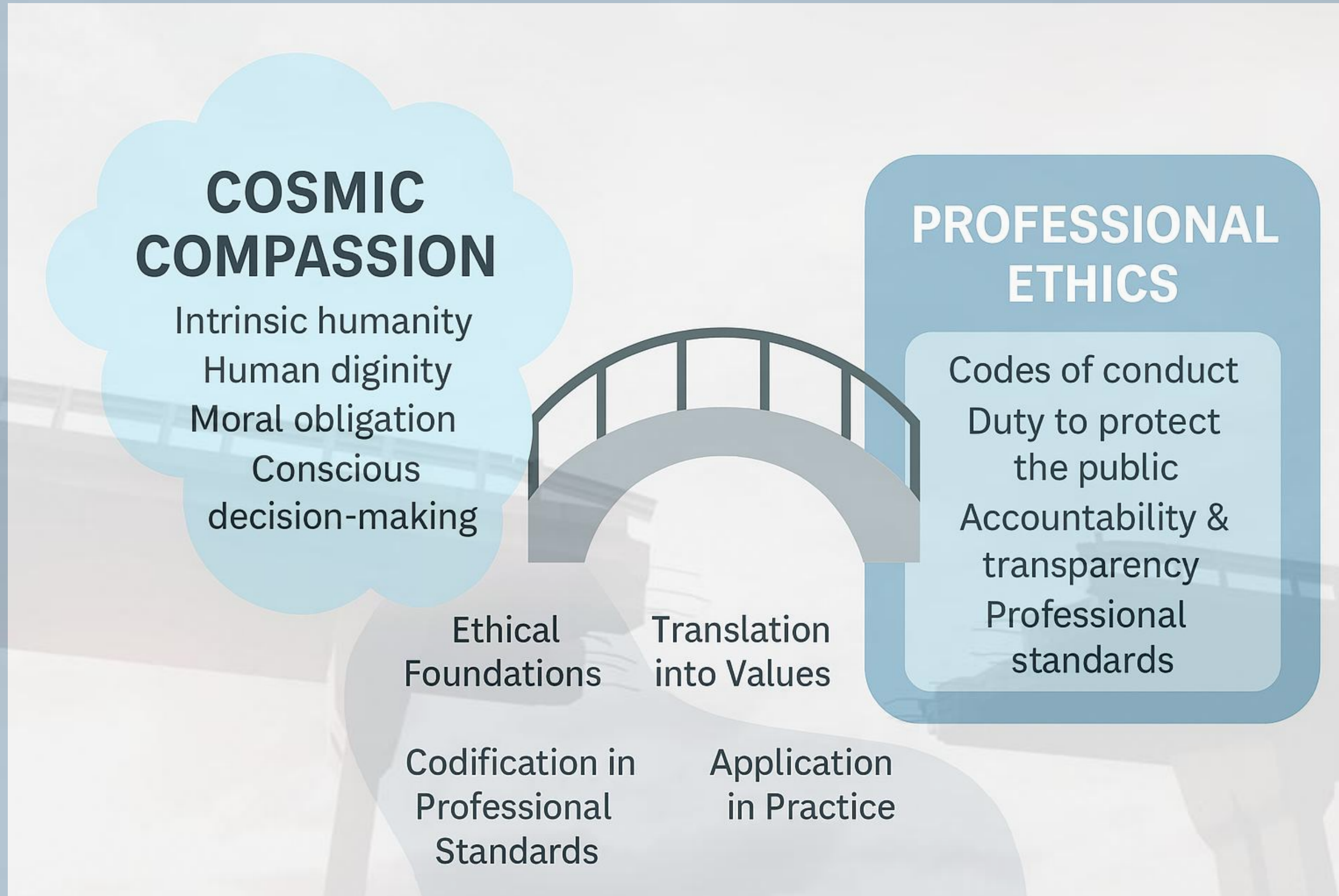
Mahmood, S.S. [@tothessence]. (n.d.). The fundamental reality of human existence [Video]. Instagram. <https://www.instagram.com/reel/DL1H7gaRRcc/?igsh=MTBwYmZmdm81MWpjaA==>

Cosmic Compassion



Image Source: (Ofei, 2024); The Minimalist Vegan.

Bridging the Gap



Professional Ethics

- First, a profession is a group of workers, such as doctors, lawyers, or safety professionals, with a higher degree of specialisation, qualification, or certification and a more significant duty of care to the public.
- Second, these experts establish moral guidelines that other professionals must adhere to (Bradbury, 2024).

Code of Conduct & Ethics

- Codes are written from rule-based, prohibitive, and aspirational ethics.
- It is not as easy as black and white to apply.

Professional body	Fundamental Duty	Code
The Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA)	“Engineers must at all times have due regard for and give priority to the health, safety, and interests of the public.”	Code of Conduct - Public Interest 3.3
The South African Council for the Project and Construction Management Profession (SACPCMP)	“PM, CM, BI & CHS professionals must at all times have due regard for and give priority to the health, safety, and interests of the public.”	Code of Conduct - 3.3 a
South African Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (SAIOSH)	“Safety professionals owe a primary loyalty to the workforce, community they serve, and the environment they affect.”	Code of Conduct 1 A - Ethics - Loyalty to Those at Risk

Professional body	Fundamental Duty	Code
Board of Certified Safety Professionals (BCSP)	“Safety professionals HOLD paramount the safety and health of people, the protection of the environment, and property.”	Code of Ethics 1 - Paramount Safety
National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE)	“Engineers hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public”.	Fundamental Canon 1
Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH)	“Safety professionals have due regard for the effect their professional activities may have on others.”	Code/Guidance - Ethics & Practice 3.4

Common Theme



George Collapse, 06 May 2024

Shingai Nyoka
BBC News, 2025

JULY 19, 2025

“South Africa
building collapse
that killed 34 was
'entirely
preventable',
minister says.”



Image Source: BBC News. (2025, July 19)

George Collapse, 06 May 2024



Sky News, 2024

MAY, 07, 2024

“South Africa: At least five dead and dozens more trapped after multi-storey apartment building under construction collapses.”

Image Source: Sky News. (2024, May 7).

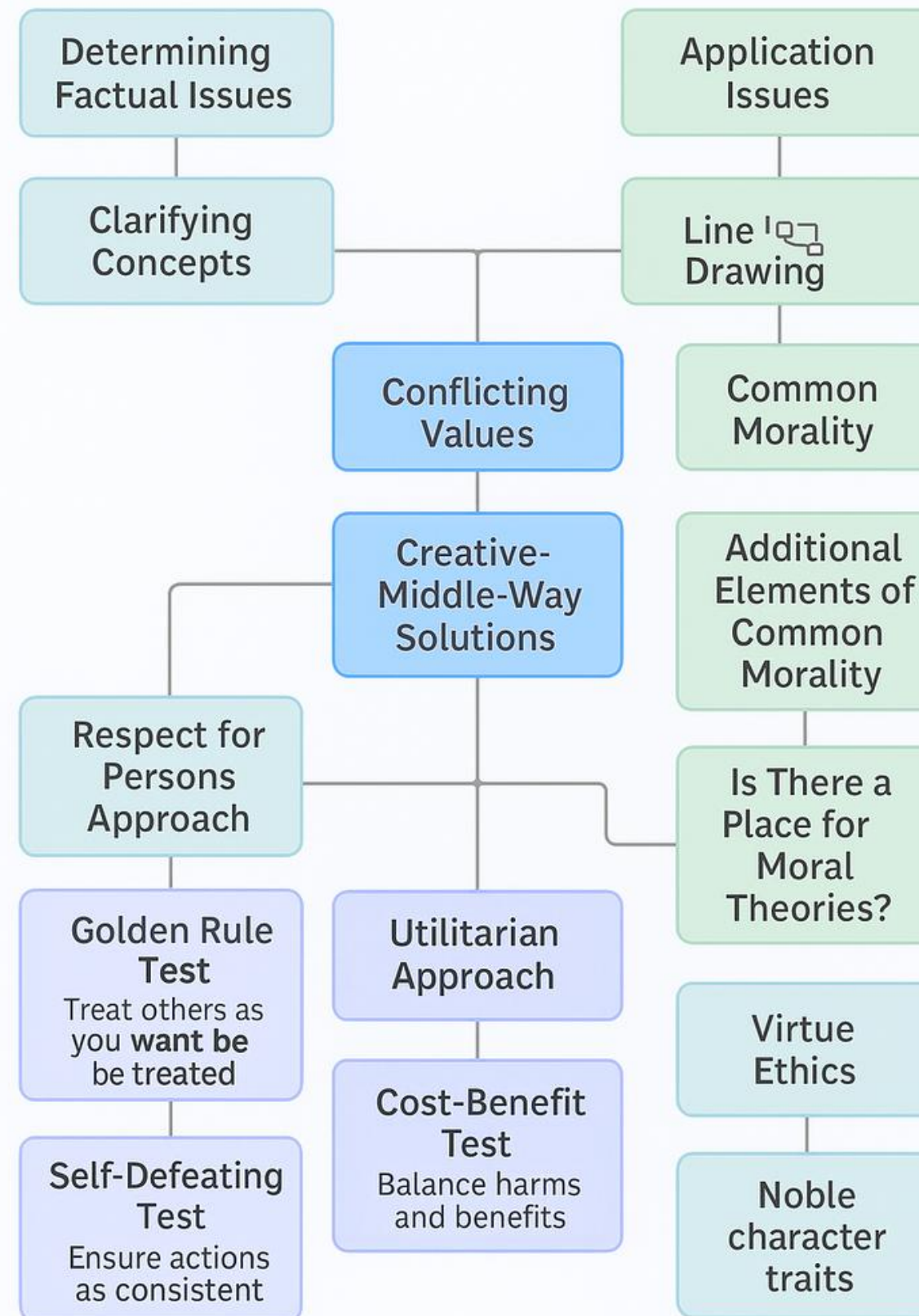


Source: Eyewitness News. (2025, July 20). George building collapse was preventable, final report reveals fatal failures [Video]. YouTube.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fwOGmVJ2ll4>

Failure/Breach	Minister Macphersons Statement	Professional body	Relevant code/Clause
Competent Person Lacked Competence	"The so-called competent person did not have the necessary competence required to oversee a project of this complexity - Five Story Building”	ECSA, NSPE	ECSA Code 3.1 - Perform Services Only in Areas of Competence; NSPE Canon 1.2 - Perform Only in Areas of Competence
Sub-Standard Concrete Used	“Measuring just 13 MPa, far short of the required 19-26 MPa”	ECSA, IOSH	ECSA Code 3.1 - Apply Knowledge Dilligently; IOSH Principle - Control Risks & Prevent Harm

Failure/Breach	Minister Macphersons statement	Professional body	Relevant code/Clause
The Geotechnical Study was Incomplete	“The geotechnical study was grossly deficient”	SACPCMP, ECSA	SACPCMP Code - Ensure Proper Risk Assessment; ECSA Code 3.5 - Ensure Adequate Technical Supervision
Health and Safety Agent Resigned & Not Reported	“Resigned, stating they could no longer ensure safe conditions, if reported the site would have been closed”	SACPCMP, IOSH	SACPCMP Code - Maintain Reporting Integrity; IOSH Principle - Communicate Risks
Weak Regulatory Environment	“No incentive or requirement to stop the project, despite dangers”	ECSA, SACPCMP, IOSH, NSPE	Codes Emphasise Public Safety as Paramount

A Practical Ethics Toolkit



Source Adopted & Changed: (Harris et al., 2019)

Navigating Ethical

Dilemmas

Source: Book
Engineering
Ethics: Concepts
and Cases

Ethical Dilemmas

- Conflict of interest
- Confidentiality
- Trade secrets/intellectual property
- Whistleblowing
- Determination of acceptable risk (varying opinions and ethics)
- Transparency of reporting
- Bribery
- Extorsion

Edward Snowden

**Hero or
Traitor?**

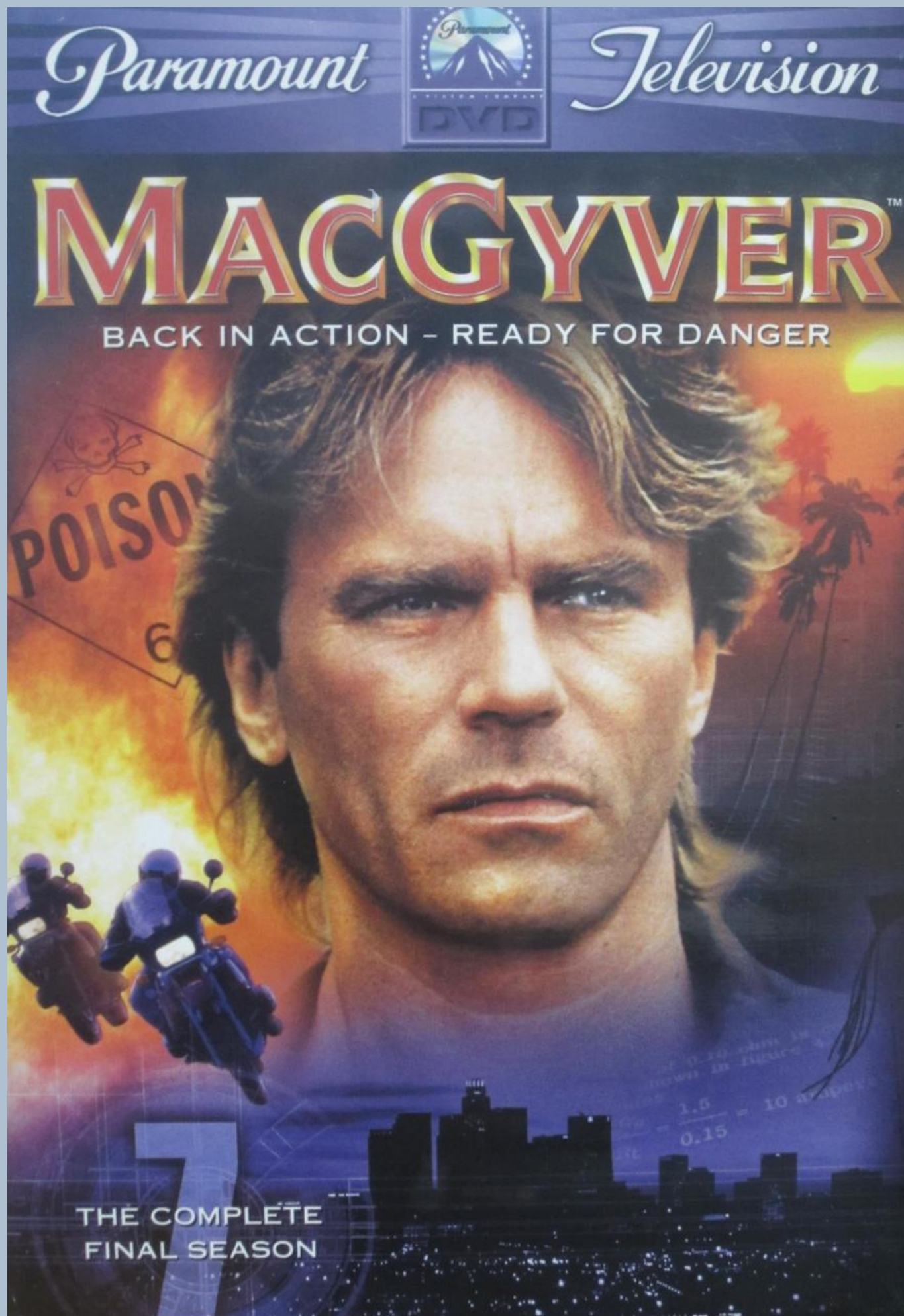


Image Source: www.theguardian.com (2023)

Brown Envelopes



Image Source: www.theguardian.com

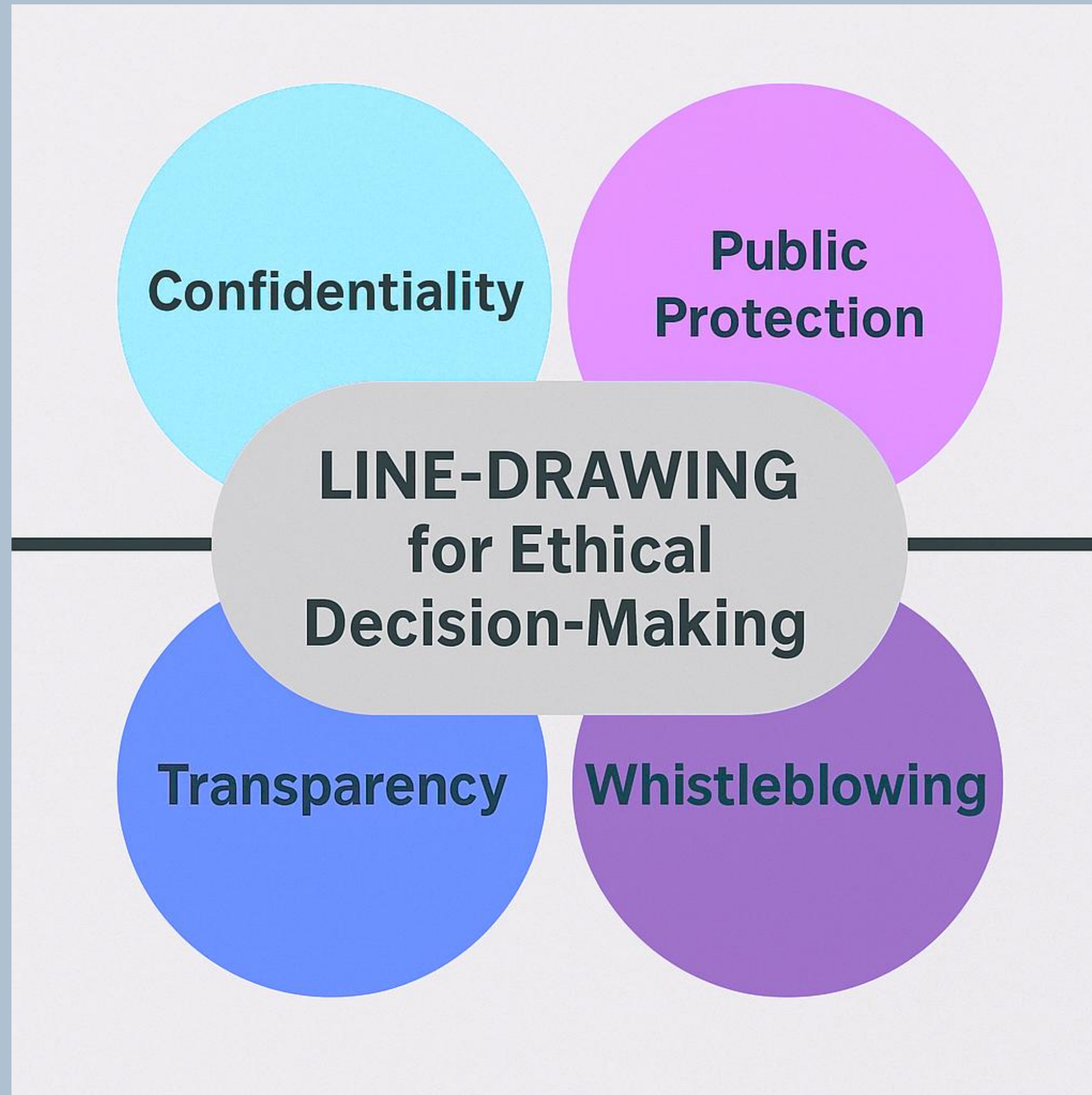


Navigating Ethical Dilemmas

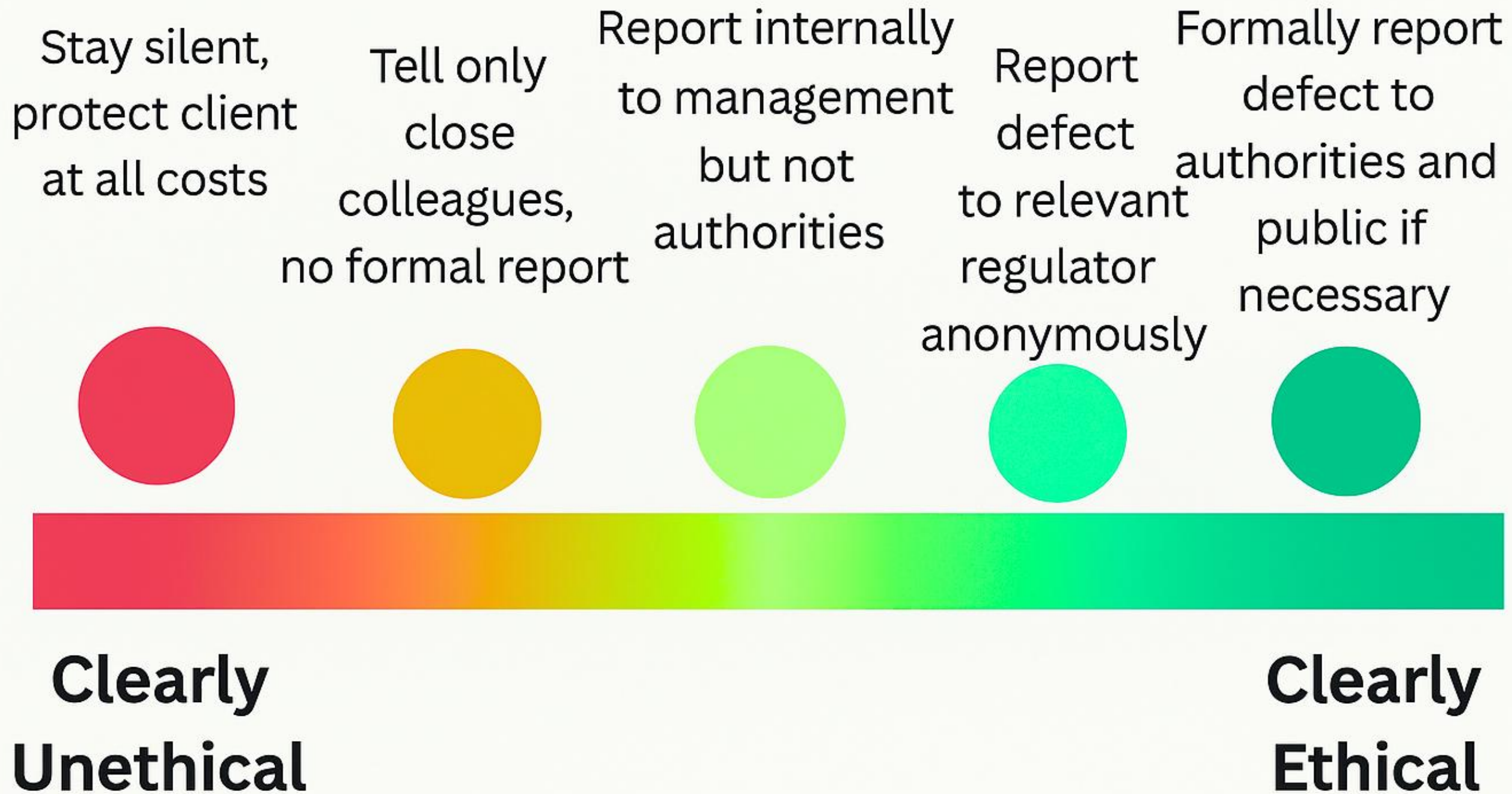
Image Source: www.amazon.com

Case Study 1: Confidentiality vs. Public Safety

- Engineer James inspects a building for a client before selling it. He discovers structural defects that could pose a public safety threat. James recommends evacuation and repair, but the client refuses, fearing legal action and losing business.
- They claim the information is theirs and should not be shared without their permission (Harris et al., 2019).



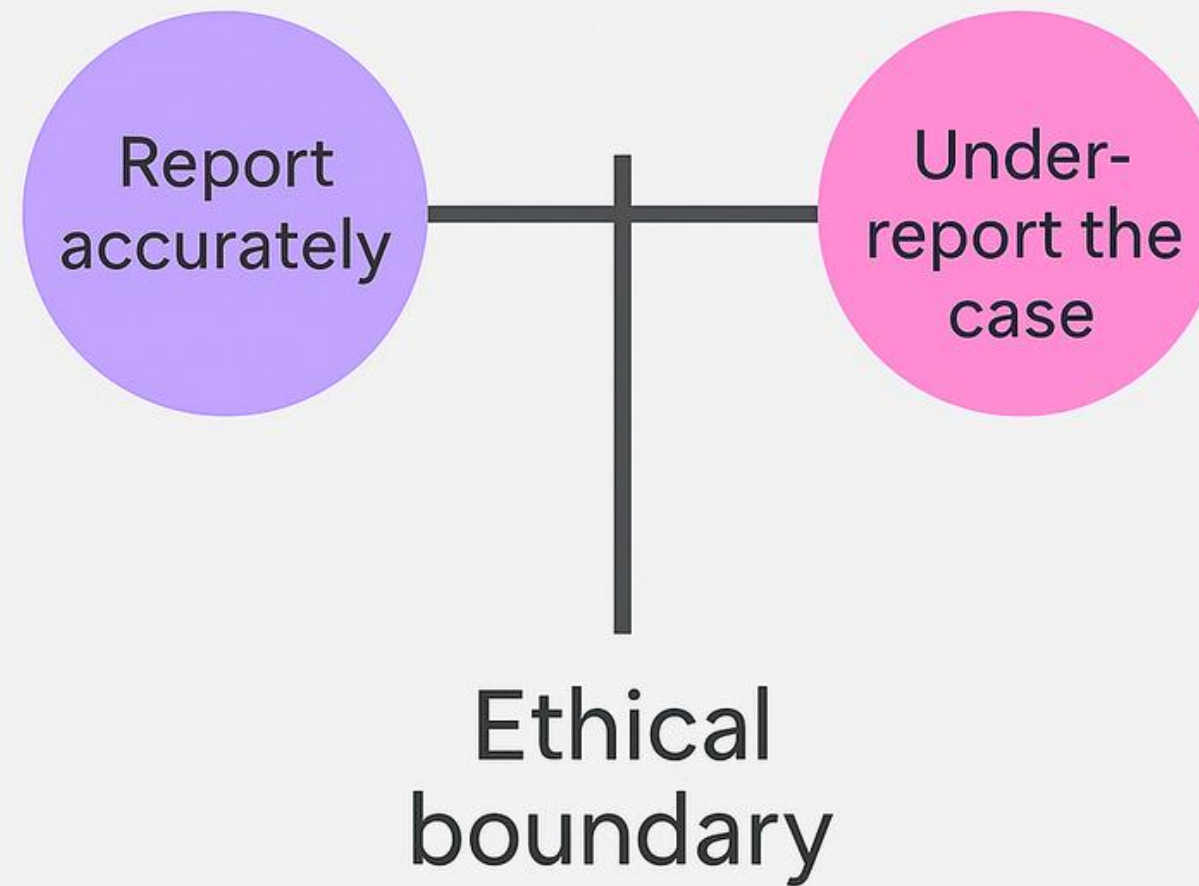
Line Drawing



Case Study 2: Reporting vs. Under-Reporting

- Tom, a Safety Professional, was instructed by his manager to report and classify an injury as a medical treatment case.
- Tom was on duty when an employee fell from a height of about 4 meters. Tom escorted the employee to the 'special' medical practitioner as per protocol.
- The medical practitioner assigned the injury as light duty, even though the employee had suffered a fractured shoulder.
- Tom observed the worker in pain at work; however, under pressure to underreport.

LINE DRAWING



Source Adopted & Changed : (Harris et al., 2019)

Case Study 3: Accepting Gifts vs. Bribery

- Matt, an engineer in a construction firm, is tasked with recommending ACME steel studs for a large apartment building. After thorough research and testing, he decides to use ACME steel studs.
- An ACME representative visits him and offers him a voucher for an all-expense-paid trip to the annual ACME Technical Forum in Jamaica (Harris et al., 2019).

Paradigm Bribe	Test Case (ACME Steel	Paradigm n-Bribe
Large (£10.000)	All-expenses-paid trip to Jamaica for ACME Technical Forum	Small token (e.g., branded pen)
Before decision to buy	Mix of professional learning and possible leisure benefit	After project completion
Personal gain	Engineer has major influence over material specification	Professional recognition only
Sole responsibility for purchase decision	Tested as high quality	Group committee decision
Lowest in market		Highest in market

BRIBE

NON-BRIBE





LLOYD ALTER, 2025

“HOW MANY PEOPLE DIED SO
THIS BUILDING COULD LIVE?”

Yaseen Francis PrCHSA | CMSaiosha | BA |
MEng (Can)

Technical Director ComPrac Holdings

Mobile: +27 74 367 4460

Email: yaseen@ohsprac.co.za



References

- Alter, L. (2025, August 8). How many people died so this building could live? Carbon Upfront!
- Board of Certified Safety Professionals. (2020). Code of ethics and professional standards.<https://www.bcsp.org/Portals/0/Assets/PDFs/BCSPCodeofEthics.pdf>
- ECSA. (n.d.). Code of conduct [Compressed version].
- IOSH. (2013). Code of conduct: Guidance and disciplinary procedure.
- National Society of Professional Engineers. (n.d.). Code of ethics for engineers.
- Nyoka, S. (2025, July 19). South Africa George building collapse that killed 34 was preventable, says minister. BBC News.
- SAIOSH. (2017, October 12). Code of conduct. Retrieved August 11, 2025.
- SACPCMP. (2000). Policy on code of conduct for registered persons.
- Sky News. (2024, May 7). South Africa: At least five dead and dozens more trapped after multi-storey apartment building under construction collapses.
- What are professional ethics, and how do they apply to safety? (n.d.). American Society of Safety Professionals.