TEACHING THE CODE OF ETHICS TO ADVANCE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

The professionalization of emergency management continues to advance with the introduction of *The Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals*. This article examines how teaching cases can help students and practitioners integrate and apply these standards in practice. An integrated review was conducted to identify gaps in the pedagogical elements for teaching *The Code*, specifically in relation to course design, instruction, and evaluation (including learning objectives, taxonomies, modalities, and assessments). The review identified limited scholarship addressing course design gaps and found disciplinary silos that may restrict students' problem-solving perspectives. The authors contend that teaching case protocols promotes "perspective widening" and reduces cognitive bias in emergency management decision-making.

Keywords: *teaching ethics, professional code of ethics*

Effective ethical decision-making in emergency management is a crucial skill that directly impacts preparation and response efforts, resource allocation, and the overall success of mitigation and recovery efforts (Butler et al., 2024; Jillson et al., 2019; Rios et al., 2015). Unethical decisions can have significant, potentially life-altering consequences for individuals and communities when the decisions are skewed by other considerations (Holmqvist & Laihinen, 2024; Knox, 2020; Torabi et al., 2019). Emergency management scholars have recently developed *The Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals* (hereinafter, *The Code*).

The Code was designed to incorporate ethical standards into practice guidelines, which lends professional stature to emergency management (Sylves, 2008). Ethical practice standards represent high-level norms that guide practical applications (Abeysinghe & Leppold, 2023;

Leider et al., 2017; Mitrović et al., 2019). Even emergency managers, who are fully aware of the importance of ethics, can encounter situational challenges from ethical dilemmas that impact everyone (Boin & Nieuwenburg, 2013; Hayes & Jackson, 2020; Parkash, 2015). Therefore, standards-based ethical instruction built on *The Code* is needed to increase ethical accountability.

Case-based instruction is used across multiple disciplines in higher education (Akbulut & Hill, 2020; Decker & Pazey, 2017; Kantar & Sailian, 2018; Maslen & Hayes, 2020) and is an effective way to provide learning experiences similar to the situations in which emergency managers will practice their profession (Herzog et al., 2024; Kyambade, 2023; Martin et al., 2021; Souders et al., 2023). The purpose of this article is to explore teaching *The Code* through the use of teaching case pedagogy and to suggest the parameters for practical use. The article concludes with a call to invite others to explore teaching case pedagogies, thereby helping to integrate the use of *The Code* within the profession.

THE CODE OF ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS

The Code is a vetted professional guide designed as a criterion for emergency management students and practitioners. The creation and establishment of *The Code* was the project of the FEMA Higher Education Program's Ethics Special Interest Group (SIG) (Smith & Feldmann-Jensen, 2024). The Ethics SIG is a group of academics, practitioners, and guest ethicists who work to support the exchange of knowledge and research in emergency management ethics. The group has met throughout the past decade to address gaps in the needs of the emergency management discipline. SIG members worked for several years to develop the standards, drawing on meetings and discussions with numerous members of the academic and practitioner communities. During the annual FEMA Higher Education Conference, members presented papers outlining the models and gathering feedback. Finally, SIG members vetted *The Code*'s comprehensive standards by systematically incorporating feedback from emergency management professionals from an extensive comment period.

Emergency management scholars acknowledge that making ethical decisions during a disaster is challenging (Crosweller & Tschakert, 2020; Cuthbertson & Penney, 2023; Dittborn et al., 2022; Etkin et al., 2016; Etkin, 2024; Ryus & Baruch, 2018). Often, groups must act with confusing or incomplete information, with different decision-makers prioritizing conflicting values, making it difficult to determine the most morally sound course of action (Etkin et al., 2016; Mitrovic et al., 2019; Saban, 2016; Zack, 2009). Having a professional code of ethics safeguards decision-making in moral dilemmas from the typical dangers of *ad hoc* decisions (Etkin et al., 2016; Etkin, 2024). Moreover, it provides a point of reference for values-based decision-making in disaster risk management and resilience-building considerations (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2016).

The Code supports ethical decision-making for professionals in overseeing complex, diverse risk portfolios that protect lives, livelihoods, and quality of life. Furthermore, *The Code* advances the

professionalization of emergency managers by delineating clear ethical responsibilities across various emergency management responsibilities. It is also designed to support the work of professors and instructors teaching emergency management in higher education. *The Code* is structured in two sections, the first of which gives the foundational tenets, listed here:

1. Think ethically, act morally.
2. Obey the law.
3. Maximize the good done for people and society, taking into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable.
4. Respect the rights of people and organizations; fulfill duties and obligations to those served.
5. Build trusting relationships.
6. When faced with an ethical dilemma, use an ethical decision-making process.

Detailed descriptions of these thematic areas can be found in The Code, included in the appendix of this article.

The second section comprises the professional standards of conduct. The section on the standards provides a universal baseline for the expectations of all emergency management professionals. These 28 professional standards of conduct are categorized under one of the seven areas of responsibility for an emergency management professional. These key areas of responsibility include

1. Responsibility to Affected Populations
2. Responsibility to Partners, Stakeholders, and the Public
3. Responsibility to the Environment
4. Responsibility to Colleagues
5. Responsibility to Employers
6. Responsibility to the Profession
7. Responsibility to Self

The tenets described in the first section of *The Code* outline the emergency management professional's responsibility to society, and the second section outlines areas of professional responsibility. Each of these areas of responsibility provides a helpful structure for instructors, students, and professionals to understand the breadth of ethical responsibilities and can inform the content of teaching. By casting ethical obligations as responsibilities, *The Code's* structure creates accountability for context-specific standards, which lend themselves to effective course design and scholarly guidance.[1] Relevantly, Appendix C of *The Code* includes a framework for

[1] Emergency management students require targeted scholarly guidance alongside teaching cases. Several recommended texts and articles (Brooks, 2015; Etkin, 2024; Etkin et al., 2016; Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2016; Heifitz & Linsky, 2017; Zack, 2009) are available to draw upon for teaching ethics and for teaching *The Code* (Etkin, 2024; Smith & Feldmann-Jensen, 2024). Additionally, ethics videos can provide material for class discussions; of particular note is the international ethics roundtable webinar, *Exploring Ethics: Lessons from COVID-19 and Other Catastrophes* (https://www.eventcreate.com/e/exploring-ethics-2022), which examines ethical emergency management topics tangential to *The Code*. Nevertheless, additional teaching tools are needed to provide more topically specific applications to address moral dilemmas in emergency management (Etkin, 2022).

ethical decision-making. An ethical decision-making framework supports ethical reasoning when there is no clear, correct answer. This framework can also be helpful in teaching cases involving ethical dilemmas.

Behavioral Anchors

This article also proposes that the behavioral anchors described in Appendix B of *The Code* are a scholarly foundation for developing learning objectives. When students demonstrate understanding and use of these anchors in their decision-making in the teaching case examples, instructors can use them to gauge student progress and measure student outcomes. Each instructor will contextualize the use of these anchors within the different case situations. The following provides a comprehensive example. One of the essential competencies identified in the Next Generation Core Competencies development and vetting process was "Abiding by Professional Ethics" (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2017; Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2019). This competency, its definition, and its behavioral anchors provided the foundation for establishing benchmarks when teaching *The Code*. The collective definition of the "Abiding by Professional Ethics" competency sets the tone and scope for the teaching approach:

> The emergency management professional both abides by and champions professional ethics. Professional ethics delineate expected and appropriate conduct, principles, and moral and ethical values that guide practice amid both known and uncertain environments. Ethics must be approached as a totality of principles, not as individual guidelines; together, the sum of principles provides an important foundation for action. (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2019, p. 21)

The behavioral anchors of the "Abiding by Professional Ethics" competency serve as defined measurement starting points for the relevant lessons. Subsequently, key actions can be drilled down to specific learning outcomes for objective measurement. The seven ethics-relevant behavioral anchors and their related key actions have been defined (Feldmann-Jensen et al., 2017) and in Appendix B of *The Code*. The behavioral anchors specific to professional ethics for emergency management include

1. Respect: Actualizes honoring of individuals and groups of people by promoting dignity, diversity, and the rights of others; recognizes and respects the weight of their actions as they work in communities.
2. Veracity: Demonstrates truthfulness and accuracy of facts, and abstains from misrepresentation in all situations.
3. Justice: Embodies a sense of obligation to the common good and treats others equitably and fairly; honors the rights of all species (present and future) when making decisions regarding the distribution of resources.
4. Integrity: Displays consistency between belief and action in all areas of life.
5. Service: Acts to help others; is altruistically motivated. Puts others first, operating beyond the ego.

6. Duty to protect: Considers the moral obligation to avert harm (present and future) and works toward a common good; facilitates community building, cognizant that all actions have consequences affecting people and performance.
7. Integrates ethical principles within stakeholder discourse: Guides ethical decision-making across multiple stakeholders, who have varying interests, to derive public value.

These measurable behavioral anchors can help frame learning objectives and discussions regarding *The Code*. For example, in planning to teach the "Responsibility to the Environment" vignette discussed in Appendix D, "Ethics in Action," corresponding key actions related to the behavioral anchors of respect, justice, and duty can be linked to the solution options in the teaching case, which represent the students' learning objectives. Sample key actions for the learning objectives on this topic could include (a) identifying opportunities to improve community capacities through citizen engagement, and (b) evaluating policies for integrating respect for all living organisms (present and future).

The measurement goal is for the case content to lead students to demonstrate the corresponding learning outcome. The example of this behavioral anchor illustrates how to integrate *The Code*'s core concepts into the teaching case structures, enabling emergency managers to apply its standards in support of ethical and professional practice.

Ethics in Action

The Code's Appendix D, "Ethics in Action," provides practitioner-generated vignettes that explore how the tenets and standards are applied in practice. The vignettes can be supplemented, modified, and expanded to provide students and practitioners with relevant, real-world examples of ethical decision-making in emergency management. The vignettes were gathered from emergency management practitioners to make learning more concrete and to examine the implications and actions resulting from ethical and unethical behavior. These vignettes are designed to resonate with diverse stakeholders in the emergency management space, requiring instructors, students, and practitioners to incorporate a range of interests to address complex problems. The ongoing production of vignettes provides multidimensional examples of real-world ethical dilemmas for the development of teaching cases. These vignettes can spark classroom discussion, analysis, and critical thinking, and provide an opportunity for problem-solving (Kallemeyn et al., 2021). Instructors and practitioners are invited to participate in developing future vignettes to build a comprehensive set of case examples for ethics instruction.

TEACHING *THE CODE*

Teaching ethical decision-making for disaster situations requires a literature-based framework that supports the behavioral anchors discussed in the previous section and must also address contextual issues. Cuthbertson and Penney (2023) conducted a systematic review. They found that most professional ethical frameworks exist in disciplinary silos, such as those in public health, clinical practice, humanitarian care, and the rules of engagement in military settings.

They noted that a universal application of an ethical framework to guide decision-making in disaster settings varied or absent in other emergency management agencies or systems. Additionally, they noted that some decision-making frameworks may be based on prior knowledge and may not reflect the future of emerging disaster risk.

Other studies have emphasized the importance of integrating shared values before developing crisis plans, as applying an ethical framework can be challenging in situations where no crisis-relevant expertise is available (Boin et al., 2021; Gostin et al., 2020; Lui et al., 2022; Zack, 2009). Lastly, codes of conduct can fall short of conveying how to implement ethical decisions in practice (Reynolds, 2015). Therefore, even frameworks based on shared standards require additional cognitive exercises to convert them into practical applications.

Ethical reasoning skills can be developed through cases or scenarios that have significant ethical implications and clear learning objectives. Inherently context-specific case studies offer real-world examples and can illustrate routine and adaptive expertise, highlighting how adaptation and innovation impact emergency management practice efforts (Slick, 2024). *The Code* encourages students to utilize its ethical decision-making framework for thinking through a case by reasoning how they would apply the principles and embrace the areas of responsibility included in the standards. *The Code* can also encourage students to explore the ethical framework that best aligns with their values and stimulates ethical reflection. Learning is enhanced when the instructor is comfortable with the topic, and students can discuss their perceptions of ethics. Thus, using *The Code* engages critical thinking on the topic, encourages deeper reflection, and fosters discourse regarding ethics.

Emergency management educators can introduce and reinforce *The Code* in various ways for students based on students' prior knowledge of ethics. Further, it is critical to establish a proven pedagogy that addresses the challenges in teaching/learning ethics. This vital process can also help students navigate the novel situations that will arise in the emergency management sector.

Case Study or Teaching Cases?

This paper suggests that the use of teaching cases is better suited for the instruction of *The Code*. We seek to engage the academy in this discussion by providing arguments in support while asking others to engage in a discussion in the literature to support or refute this notion. Literature supports the use of multiple methodologies to teach ethical decision-making in emergency management, and the case method is widely employed (Slick, 2016). A model for instructional design of teaching cases in emergency management is explored in depth by Classen and McDuffie (2025), citing Slick (2016).[2] Fundamentally, both pedagogies are student-centered and offer distinct ways for students to engage with the situation, case, or vignette. Furthermore, real-

[2] In this article, we argue that the teaching case methodology explored in Classen and McDuffie (2025) should be used when teaching *The Code.*

world scenarios have been found to make learning more concrete and reveal the implications and actions resulting from unethical behavior (Elkins & Fambegbe, 2020).

Case studies provide a context-driven approach to teaching ethics that allows learners to think through ethical issues and debates using grounded information and make decisions that would or can potentially have real consequences (Herzog et al., 2024). They ask students to apply theoretical frameworks or principles to pre-developed real-world dilemmas, with the expectation that students will transfer knowledge, identify issues, and present strategies and procedures to address the case issues (Ameta et al., 2020). Mahdi et al. (2020) argue that the case study method offers a highly adaptable approach to problem-based learning, increasing the number of students who critically analyze and evaluate situations. The cases may be based on actual events or a conglomeration of events. Case studies are helpful at the start of a course to facilitate awareness, in the middle to illustrate concepts, stimulate reflection, and develop analytic skills, and finally for concept integration and formative and summative assessment (Hoffman, 2018).

The primary difference between case studies and teaching cases lies in the cases themselves. In case studies, the cases are "experiences," whereas teaching cases or problem-based examples are problems to be solved (Tawfic & Kolodner, 2016). Teaching with cases supports processes where students develop new knowledge rather than receive it (Liang et al., 2020). Teaching cases are designed to be context-specific, enabling students to take responsibility for their learning and apply the knowledge to professional practice (Rovers et al., 2018). Further, Allchin (2013) suggests that the benefits of problem-based (teaching case) learning help students expand their current perspectives and navigate closed-end (authority-based) constraints to incorporate multiple perspectives and encourage autonomy and personal relevance. Furthermore, Srigyan and Fortun's (2025) teaching case model for studying environmental disasters requires students to "read across cases," a method that asks them to examine different frames and categorical schemes, noting that no single type of scientific knowledge can provide a definitive answer. Through the proposed model, students review a myriad of factors, including different pathways, stakeholders, vulnerabilities, and harms; lack of information; lack of proven strategies; and intersecting injustices. This approach enables them to learn to ask the right questions instead of being asked to identify the right issues and answers. This typology asks students to build case assessments using the learning they acquired at a previous level of learning. The process seeks to "widen" students' perspectives, enabling them to transfer their knowledge to different situations.

Another pedagogical question is posed by Kotluk and Tormey (2024), who discuss how students' emotions impact decision-making. They found that emotions were linked to both emotional issues and feelings of powerlessness during the decision-making process. This study suggests that understanding how emotionally laden examples impact ethical sense-making is another factor in assessing student comprehension (Souders et al., 2023).

Precise case construction for teaching cases (whether as vignettes, intermediate cases, or comprehensive cases) is essential to reduce biased assumptions and value judgments often

woven into the fabric of the case material (Schröter & Röber, 2022). The teaching case process requires more information on community context, narratives, and demographics so that students can ask the necessary questions to integrate ethical standards with the objectives they are trying to achieve (Slick, 2016). Teaching cases also require instructors to identify instances of bias in the case itself, explain the reasoning behind any questions, and integrate competing considerations. Additionally, variations in learner exposure and experience are crucial considerations for determining case complexity. Instructors must work to gauge students' learning goals by varying the level of case analysis skills needed, selecting relevant cases, and integrating examples that connect or reinforce key concepts. Teaching cases that require students to have analytic skills may reduce the potential for active discussion and creative engagement (McFarlane, 2015).

The authors argue that *The Code* can be effectively taught using teaching cases since the goal is to help students develop critical and ethical decision-making skills from a variety of different stakeholders and perspectives. We argue that the use of teaching cases helps students understand situational constraints, make informed decisions, and consider potential outcomes. The open-ended nature of these cases allows students to review the myriad options and their corresponding consequences, including those not conceptualized by the instructor. In doing so, they will expand the evidence they use to evaluate and select alternatives, discuss the rationale for their selection (Puri, 2022), and effectively reflect on the outcomes of their decisions (Harris, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

An integrated literature review was conducted to understand which aspects of the teaching case pedagogy effectively support teaching *The Code* and ethical decision-making using it. An integrative literature review is a research method that synthesizes the literature on a specific topic by examining sources that utilize multiple research methodologies. This approach can be used to evaluate, critique, and synthesize the literature on a research topic, enabling the development of new theoretical perspectives and frameworks (Benzaghta et al., 2021; see also Torraco, 2005). The methodology is based on Whittemore and Knafl's (2025) framework, which is suitable for this study because it helps identify the parameters of a phenomenon that has not been widely studied (Cronin & George, 2023; Darko et al., 2022; Jung, 2022; Torraco, 2016).

The review follows the systematic process of problem or goal identification, literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation (Whittemore & Knafl, 2025). The goal of an integrated literature review is to synthesize-findings and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the current state of knowledge, or to highlight areas where the literature is incomplete, contradictory, or in need of further investigation (Torraco, 2016). Integrative reviews can be used to guide future research; they can be specific, such as in providing specific research questions or propositions, or broader, mapping out different areas of research (Snyder, 2024).

For this review, five databases were accessed: PsycINFO, Academic Search Complete, Social Science Database (ProQuest), ScienceDirect, and Google Scholar. The search was conducted

using predefined keywords and inclusion criteria, with no language restrictions. The search was conducted in June 2024 and December 2024 and was updated in May 2025. Single and combined searches were conducted using the following keywords as search terms: (a) *teaching cases*; (b) *disaster or emergency management*, (c) *pedagogy*, and (d) *ethics and ethics instruction*. The criteria used to evaluate the articles for inclusion focused on the following: (a) population: students, instructors, and professors; (b) intervention: course pedagogy using teaching cases; (c) comparative case studies; and (d) outcomes: the intervention should support more effective critical or reflective thinking.

Multiple reviewers performed title and abstract, as well as full-text screening. A single reviewer conducted data abstraction and assessed the risk of bias (Tricco et al., 2015). Of the more than 40 cases that the three primary authors reviewed, 17 articles were selected for additional review. A full-text review was conducted for the 17 cases. The cases were selected to broaden the scope of the review across multiple disciplines and perspectives. The authors acknowledge that broadening the scope of the papers selected may increase bias in the results (Bucala et al, 2025). However, the articles were purposefully selected to represent different methodological typologies, academic disciplines, and foci to understand the benefits of using teaching case instruction on *The Code* and to support a multidisciplinary call for papers.

RESULTS

The results from the selected articles suggested gaps in understanding the specifications of the learning objectives, taxonomies, modalities, and assessments. These gaps pertain to the elements that support the perspective-widening benefits of using teaching cases to teach *The Code.* Seventeen cases comprise the primary focus of the review; two additional cases were included to support a further expansion of the call to address this specific type of modality through case-based experiential learning.

Learning Objectives

Establishing learning objectives is central to focusing teaching content, student engagement, and objectively measuring outcomes. A learning objective is a clear, specific, and measurable statement that describes what a learner should know, understand, or be able to do after completing a learning experience (Chatterjee & Corral, 2017). These goals outline the expected outcome of a lesson, module, or course, providing a roadmap for both instruction and assessment. Designing learning objectives is critically important in teaching cases. Students use learning objectives to guide their studying, and there is a beneficial alignment between concepts in case studies and learning objectives that overlap (Herbert & O'Donnell, 2020). Oseuke et al. (2018) suggests that tailoring these case studies to the course learning outcomes can lead to increased student performance on assessments of those outcomes.

Learning objectives not linked to appropriate taxonomies can create misalignment, forcing students to ask questions yielding answers that do not move them toward resolution. This consistency is especially critical with teaching cases, when no single answer exists to the proposed question of the case (Cochran, 2021). When learning objectives are aligned with taxonomies, the learning outcomes are more significant because students are key players in their learning (Burgui, 2023). Learning objectives in teaching cases can target students' development of meaningful questions, rather than focusing solely on questions that uncover additional information related to uncertainty. This focus is critical in an ethical environment because it necessitates the thorough incorporation of multiple stakeholders and perspectives, whose values and beliefs may not be well understood.

Targeted learning objectives based on problem-based instruction were used in a study by Stalker et al. (2015) as a methodology to reveal whether an intervention could prepare educators to address a weather emergency in their schools. The educators successfully achieved the learning objectives by using the teaching case and gained an understanding of the responsibilities of other stakeholders in the weather emergency decision-making process. The outcome of the intervention was that most educators stated they would feel confident in making severe weather decisions for their schools if the decision was left to them (Stalker et al., 2015). This outcome demonstrates that the teaching case model fosters greater confidence in ethical decision-making in situations with no predetermined solutions.

Taxonomy

Using teaching cases to integrate and diffuse *The Code* must be enabled by a strong taxonomy. Taxonomies provide a framework for categorizing learning objectives into different levels of cognitive complexity, leading to effective and measurable learning outcomes. Various taxonomy tools, including Bloom et al. (1956), Biggs and Collis (1982), Fink (2003), and Schulman (2004), target learning areas and advance the learning objectives. Bloom et al.'s (1956) taxonomy includes factual, conceptual, procedural, and metacognitive models, which help describe students' awareness of their thought processes in learning, a point at which both cognitive and social constructivist models of learning converge. Fink's (2003) nonhierarchical, affective taxonomy includes elements interacting with one another to stimulate other kinds of learning. This learning includes application—cultivating critical, creative, and practical thinking skills; integration—recognizing connections between information, ideas, perspectives, and lived experiences; human dimension—learning about oneself and others; caring—developing new feelings, interests, and values; and learning how to learn—becoming self-directed, lifelong learners. Biggs and Collis's (1982) Solo Taxonomy model is used to align students' learning outcomes from an activity, unit, or classroom program into three levels of knowledge: surface knowledge, deep knowledge, or conceptual or constructed knowledge. Shulman's (2004) Table of Learning Taxonomy (sTOL) is a framework for understanding student learning, particularly in professional fields, that emphasizes engagement, knowledge, performance, reflection, judgment, and commitment. This framework is a tool for interdisciplinary reflection on student learning, progressing beyond purely intellectual endeavors.

Irvine's (2021) discussion of the sTOL taxonomy found that this taxonomy supports the required transformation for students to develop ethical perspectives. The learning process involves continuous formation, testing, and refinement of ideas and concepts through evidence and investigation. Creating flexible learning environments, where understanding is not fixed, encourages judgment, which subsequently deepens understanding, allowing teaching cases to be explored by various students and return different insights. Irvine's comprehensive review of the different taxonomies should be further mined as scholars develop teaching cases. As case vignettes are explored, different taxonomies may emerge that support teaching case instruction.

Modality

The various instructional modalities used for ethical decision-making include face-to-face, online, and hybrid instruction. To evaluate the effectiveness of these methods, Todd et al. (2017) examined students in various course modalities to determine which modality was the most effective for teaching ethics. They postulated that instruction-based compliance-related content would be more effective when taught online. In contrast, process-based concepts related to the application of ethical decision-making, including motivation, ethical awareness, and forecasting, were best taught in face-to-face settings. Though their results were caveated by limited comparison between modalities related to course design and content, course domain differences, the number of courses available for review, and the restriction of their review to studies with significant results, the authors found that hybrid settings were more effective in teaching ethics because they integrate compliance and process factors. The hybrid model is well-suited for emergency management instruction. Similarly, the hybrid model is well utilized to support ethics instruction.

When conducting an undergraduate ethics module, Wong and Low (2024) found that online debates about ethical statements yielded positive feedback on learners' experiences, even though some participants did not agree that the debates enhanced their critical reasoning skills. Another type of modality included as a hybrid is one that utilizes experiential learning. Two additional articles were included to note that experiential learning has been integrated into case-based learning (Patil et al., 2020). However, the literature is only beginning to develop experiential learning assessments to determine whether these learning environments can be effectively evaluated (Fu et al., 2025). The limited number of studies on modalities suggests that more research is needed surrounding the flexibility of using teaching cases to achieve *The Code*'s learning outcomes in different classroom settings.

Assessments

Developing an appropriate assessment methodology involves aligning curriculum and pedagogy and measuring the effectiveness of course interventions. Assessments are intended to inform instructors whether and to what extent the implementation and delivered programs differ from the intended/planned intervention, including whether students experience the intervention. If the assessment is effective, it will show that the intervention impacted the learning objectives.

Studies also show that students generally perform better on assessments that require higher-order thinking skills, such as analyzing data from simulations and case studies, than on traditional multiple-choice exams (Lundberg & Yadav, 2006; Taylor, 2009).

A variety of assessment tools have been integrated into case studies, including interviews, journals, video reviews, logs, oral presentations, and other simulations (Sewagegn, 2020). Furthermore, identifying the key elements of a case study is crucial for understanding strategic issues and potential solutions. Students who cannot identify, understand, analyze, and evaluate these elements will likely struggle to develop a plan to achieve the case's objectives (Razzouk & Razzouk, 2008). Ethics scholars have utilized implementation fidelity to assess the alignment of course outcomes with interventions and have suggested methods to integrate the theories supporting each outcome with the intervention (Smith et al., 2019).

Bias is another important issue for assessing the outcomes of both teaching cases and case studies, since both are focused on cognitive learning. Scholars suggest that the decisions of emergency management professionals can be influenced by cognitive biases, such as the anchoring bias, even when they are trained to consider multiple information sources (Brooks et al., 2020; Etkin, 2024; Paulus et al., 2022). Anchoring bias occurs when people overemphasize the first piece of information they receive when making decisions, even if that information is irrelevant, which influences subsequent judgments (Comes, 2016; Roberts & Wernstedt, 2019; Wang, 2023). This cognitive bias can negatively impact decision-making, particularly in high-stakes situations, such as emergency management (Roberts & Wernstedt, 2019). However, because of the familiarity or lack of novelty of some teaching cases, students may avoid demonstrating decision-making biases that keep them attached to prior, even unworkable solutions when faced with novel dilemmas. In any case, assessments should be designed to identify issues where bias may be present and to mitigate its impact on their decision.

Lastly, to determine whether "failure case studies" effectively assessed specific learning objectives, Delatte et al. (2013) surveyed 718 students at seven universities. They used indirect quantitative measures to assess specific outcomes, finding that assessments using failure case studies showed that professional component outcomes were addressed more readily. Specifically, the task of understanding professional and ethical responsibility consistently received high ratings. This study suggested that case-based learning is effective for assessing professional ethical learning, such as required by *The Code.* Therefore, scholars need to continue developing assessment tools aligned with appropriate learning objectives, taxonomies, and modalities, so that their use in teaching cases supports students' incorporation of ethical standards into practice.

DISCUSSION

The results of the integrated review suggest that teaching cases are an effective method for teaching *The Code*. The results also indicate that teaching cases need to be connected to behavioral anchors and the scholarly literature to provide students with reasons and explanations

beyond the teaching case examples. Structured decision-making frameworks, including behavioral guidance such as that outlined in *The Code*, challenge assumptions, incorporate diverse perspectives, and systematically evaluate options, thereby helping to mitigate biases known to affect ethical decision-making during disasters. Through teaching cases, instructors, students, and practitioners can broaden their perspectives beyond disciplinary boundaries, incorporating community and contextual narratives. This inclusive perspective helps tell the story of the disaster, expose the ethical dilemma, and identify the individuals who will be impacted by the decisions that are made.

CONCLUSION

The integrated review concluded that teaching cases are an appropriate method for teaching *The Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals*. This approach helps students develop critical and ethical decision-making skills by considering diverse stakeholders and perspectives. The study's findings underscore the importance of linking teaching cases to behavioral anchors and existing scholarly literature, thereby providing students with explanations that extend beyond the case examples themselves. Furthermore, this article suggests that expanding structured decision-making frameworks to include behavioral guidance within *The Code* can help mitigate biases that often affect ethical decision-making. *The Code*'s provisions also help students challenge assumptions and systematically evaluate options. This method motivates instructors, students, and practitioners to widen their perspectives beyond disciplinary limitations to incorporate community and contextual narratives. The teaching case process facilitates the identification of ethical dilemmas and their impact on individuals and communities.

Ultimately, the effective integration of *The Code's* ethical standards into emergency management instruction relies on incorporating appropriate learning objectives, taxonomies, modalities, and assessments. Additionally, aligning *The Code's* provisions with its accumulation of industry insights found in the "Ethics in Action" appendix nudges students towards ethical decisions. While this review provides a foundational understanding, it also highlights the need for further research to identify specific pedagogical elements that support the integration of *The Code's* requirements into practice through the use of teaching cases.

LIMITATIONS

While acknowledging that a broader selection of articles could have enhanced the scope and reduced selection bias, the researchers intentionally cast a wide net in their study selection. This approach was a deliberate choice to stimulate greater interest and encourage further multidisciplinary research across the full spectrum of emergency management, ultimately aiming to support both instructors and students in the field. The primary goal was to pose foundational questions that future researchers can explore more comprehensively in response to the call for papers.

CALL TO ACTION

You are invited to submit a paper for inclusion in a special edition of The *Journal of Security, Intelligence, and Resilience Education* (JSIRE). This peer-reviewed online journal captures the dynamic and rapidly evolving nature of homeland security, emergency management, and intelligence education. The special edition will explore how *The Code* of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals can be taught to emergency management students and practitioners using teaching cases. Therefore, the call is specifically for teaching cases to facilitate better understanding and dissemination of *The Code*. We also invite you to build on the scholarship of these initial articles to answer the questions posed, expand on, or go beyond the elements introduced. To this end, *The Code* is attached in the appendix.

The Editor of JSIRE invites homeland security, emergency management, and intelligence practitioners and academics, as well as practitioners and scholars from related fields, to submit manuscripts that will help prepare the next generation of policymakers and practitioners for the 21st century's threats and hazards. A Call for Papers will be generated in January 2026.

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APPENDIX

Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals

Introduction

Emergency management is a managerial function charged with creating the framework within which communities reduce vulnerability to hazards and cope with disasters. Emergency management professionals seek to promote safer, less vulnerable communities with the capacity to cope with hazards and disasters. Communities in this context are broadly defined to include humans, organizations, the environment, and government.

Emergency management professionals work with a diverse group of stakeholders in a wide variety of businesses and industry sectors, in non-profit organizations, and in all levels of government. Emergency management professionals are relied upon for their subject matter expertise and support in managing a diverse, complex risk portfolio for the communities they serve. Emergency management professionals recognize the value of, and are committed to, developing and promoting in themselves and their organizations the following competencies: disaster risk management; community engagement; governance and civics; leadership; scientific, geographic, sociocultural, technological, and systems literacy; operations consistent with the emergency management framework, principles, and body of knowledge; critical thinking; continual learning; and, compliance with professional ethics.

Inherent in the practice of emergency management is a series of duties and responsibilities to affected populations, partners, stakeholders, the public, the environment, colleagues, employers, the profession, and self. These duties and responsibilities were examined in concert with established competency behavioral anchors related to professional ethics (see Appendix B) and foundational ethical tenets to develop expected professional conduct standards. In its totality, the *Code of Ethics and Professional Standards of Conduct for Emergency Management Professionals* delineates an ethical framework to guide practice in both known and uncertain environments.

Code of Ethics

The Code of Ethics provides emergency management professionals with a set of foundational tenets that guide ethical practice and decision-making. These tenets emphasize the need to think and act ethically. Emergency management professionals have a duty of care that requires a careful, critical decision-making process grounded in ethical deliberation.

This Code of Ethics is intended to help frame ethical thinking about behaviors and decisions in conjunction with the Code of Professional Standards of Conduct. Emergency management professionals can utilize this Code of Ethics to ensure a more careful and critical process regarding behaviors or decisions that are morally or ethically challenging. The foundational tenets, both aspirational and prescriptive, capture the essence of effective and just emergency management practice.

Foundational Tenets

Think ethically, act morally.
Sometimes it is clear what the right thing to do is, but often it can be difficult to sort out, especially if there are conflicting ethical arguments (see Appendix C). It is not enough to be able to ethically analyze situations or to know what the right thing to do is; emergency management professionals must act morally. To act morally, emergency management professionals' actions should evidence moral courage, integrity, honesty, respect, kindness, professionalism, competence, impartiality, and objectivity. These actions delineate the requisite moral character for professional emergency management practice. Ethical decision-making is strongest when the knowledge and skills to analyze the ethics of complicated situations and the moral character to act in the best way possible are both present.

Obey the law.
A social contract exists between citizens and their governments, with duties and obligations on both sides. As citizens and as emergency management professionals, there is an obligation to obey the law, except in very rare cases where a law is immoral. But there is an important distinction between what is legal and what is moral. The law is prescriptive, not aspirational, and represents minimal standards of morality. There are times when it is sufficient to simply obey the law, and there are other times when obeying the law is not enough to satisfy moral imperatives. For example, the law does not require emergency management professionals to treat victims with kindness, but it is moral to do so.

Maximize the good done for people and society, taking into consideration the needs of the most vulnerable.
A basic principle of ethics is to do the greatest good for the greatest number, as long as the most vulnerable are not disadvantaged. This principle is important and must be tempered in two ways. First, what is good and how is it measured must be debated and agreed upon (e.g., political parties often disagree on what is good, as do environmentalists compared to real estate developers). It is not solely up to emergency management professionals to decide what is good – these decisions are best made by engaging stakeholders to derive public values. Second, people and institutions have rights that should not be needlessly or thoughtlessly trampled over in the pursuit of a greater good.

Respect the rights of people and organizations; fulfill duties and obligations to those served.
One of the problems with maximizing good is that it can be used to justify bad actions if the needs of many are served. As a society, we agree that some actions that serve the greater good are immoral (e.g., we do not harvest organs from people without their consent, even if doing so would save several lives). We need to be aware of, and respect, the rights of others whether they are constitutionally based, defined by laws, or accepted as cultural norms. There are also times when the perceived rights of some conflict with the common good, or the rights of others (e.g., choosing not to wear a face mask during a pandemic may conflict with the rights of others not to get infected, or the health of the public at large).

Emergency management professionals have duties and obligations to employers, clients, and stakeholders, which must be fulfilled. While many of these duties and obligations are defined by job descriptions, some are a result of societal expectations (which though unwritten, are important and can be powerful). Emergency management professionals must act ethically and professionally in the execution of their duties and obligations.

Build trusting relationships.
Trust is an asymmetrical relationship, which means that it is hard to gain and easy to lose. Trusting relationships are essential to effective emergency management practice. Trust is gained by having a virtuous character (particularly fidelity), being competent, following the law, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

A conflict of interest is a situation in which an emergency management professional has a private or personal interest sufficient to influence (or even have the appearance to influence) the objective exercise of his or her official duties. Emergency management professionals must avoid their judgment being influenced by any conflict of interest and shall inform their employer, or client, of any conflict between their own personal interest and service to the relevant party.

When faced with an ethical dilemma, use an ethical decision-making process.
Ethical dilemmas (having to choose between two rights or two wrongs) present difficult choices between competing ethical principles. Ethical dilemmas occur either because different ethical perspectives (such as the greater good versus individual rights) lead to different decisions, or because of varying underlying values (such as defining good as economic development versus environmental protection). Ethical dilemmas can be extremely difficult and contentious to manage. When faced with an ethical dilemma there is generally no one correct answer. In addressing these dilemmas, a transparent, inclusive and effective decision-making process should be used to arrive at an equitable outcome based on ethical reasoning (see Appendix C).

Professional Standards of Conduct

These standards present professional expectations for all emergency management professionals and extend across all areas of practice as well as individuals' representation of the profession of emergency management. These standards focus heavily on the duty of care inherent in the practice of emergency management and seek to clearly delineate expected professional behaviors. These standards may reach beyond organizational or jurisdictional policies, requirements, or laws; conversely, organizational or jurisdictional policies, requirements, or laws may issue more stringent standards. These standards should be viewed as universal baseline expectations for all emergency management professionals.

Responsibility to Affected Populations

STANDARD 1: Emergency management professionals recognize that diversity in needs exist and work to provide services without discrimination or preference.

STANDARD 2: Emergency management professionals use their expertise to communicate clearly, effectively, and appropriately regarding risks.

STANDARD 3: Emergency management professionals collaborate with stakeholders to understand vulnerabilities, exposures, threats, and the unique characteristics of communities in determining risk reduction measures.

STANDARD 4: Emergency management professionals advance the development and implementation of programs, plans, strategies, and initiatives to support life safety, reduce or eliminate damage to property and the environment, and support quality of life.

Responsibility to Partners, Stakeholders, and the Public

STANDARD 5: Emergency management professionals create and maintain robust, effective relationships with a wide variety of partners.

STANDARD 6: Emergency management professionals are aware of and operate within applicable laws and regulations.

STANDARD 7: Emergency management professionals educate, inform, and promote change in programs, policies, regulations, and laws that conflict with the professional and effective practice of emergency management.

STANDARD 8: Emergency management professionals accurately represent their qualifications.

STANDARD 9: Emergency management professionals support and guide evidence-based choices and actions by clearly communicating the adverse impacts of hazards and threats based on scientific evidence.

STANDARD 10: Emergency management professionals stay informed about new research, practice standards, relevant tools, and technologies.

STANDARD 11: Emergency management professionals remain current on issues that affect public risk.

STANDARD 12: Emergency management professionals do not engage in or endorse abusive, harassing, or hostile professional relationships.

STANDARD 13: Emergency management professionals make sound fiscal decisions that support effective practice and the stewardship of resources.

Responsibility to the Environment

STANDARD 14: Emergency management professionals understand the interconnectedness, interdependence, and sensitivities between the human, built, cyber, and natural environments.

STANDARD 15: Emergency management professionals seek to protect the natural environment from harm and, where practical, nurture its recovery.

Responsibility to Colleagues

STANDARD 16: Emergency management professionals support and assist other professionals in meeting and elevating emergency management practice.

STANDARD 17: Emergency management professionals respond appropriately to unprofessional and problematic behavior of their colleagues.

Responsibility to Employers

STANDARD 18: Emergency management professionals take direction from employers without deviating from professional standards.

STANDARD 19: Emergency management professionals have a duty to provide employers with all available relevant facts, data, and resources so that they are able make informed decisions.

STANDARD 20: Emergency management professionals, whether in formal or informal leadership roles, have an obligation to use an ethical decision-making model to help create an organizational culture that promotes and encourages professional behavior.

Responsibility to the Profession

STANDARD 21: Emergency management professionals have a duty to further the standing of the profession through their words, behaviors, and actions.

STANDARD 22: Emergency management professionals have an obligation to advocate for a representative and diverse profession.

STANDARD 23: Emergency management professionals promote the continuing development and improvement of their profession.

STANDARD 24: Emergency management professionals support and assist emergency management students in their learning and career development, including opportunities to engage in relevant internships and practicums, participate in training and practice activities, and contribute to meaningful work projects and initiatives.

Responsibility to Self

STANDARD 25: Emergency management professionals have a commitment to lifelong learning and to continually advance their knowledge and skills to serve their community and the profession.

STANDARD 26: Emergency management professionals recognize how their own cultural and social backgrounds, beliefs, values, and biases may affect competent and just service, and strive to make proactive positive changes for the benefit of their constituents.

STANDARD 27: Emergency management professionals are mindful of the ways in which stress can affect their health and well-being and take appropriate self-care measures.

STANDARD 28: Emergency management professionals practice continual self-reflection focused on professional growth and development.