



Learning resource

Demonstrate knowledge of electrical industry ethical work practices (Level 3, Credits 2)

Trainee Name: _____

This document is strictly confidential and the contents must not be disclosed to any unauthorised persons or used in any unethical or illegal manner. This document is protected by Copyright Act 1994 © and is not to be copied or reproduced in any form unless written permission is given by The Skills Organisation Incorporated.

Contents

Part 1: Upholding standards	1
Community ethics	2
Fair, right, and just.....	3
EWRB disciplinary processes.....	4
Part 2: Ethics as an employee	5
Attitude and aptitude.....	5
Workplace behaviour.....	7
Personal accountability.....	8
Good time keeping and punctuality	8
Use of electronic devices.....	8
Integrity.....	9
Teamwork.....	10
Skills and competency.....	11
In summary.....	12

Part 1: Upholding standards

Obviously, we all have to meet a bunch of standards while doing electrical work. If we are following the law, we have the backing of the law and that can take some stress out of what we do.

The idea of any legislation that is in place is, to make sure we are doing good, sound, safe work that is a benefit to everyone, ourselves included. It is actually about getting a good result.

Some legislation we all have to comply with in the electrical industry:

- The Electrical Act
- The Health and Safety Act
- The Fair Trading Act
- The Electrical Safety Regulations
- The Electrical Standards



Aside from the law of the land, there are also moral standards – “ethics”, that we all should be following in our work lives.

Being professional in your work, you are going to have great workmanship, you are going to be safe in your work and your customers are going to be happy with how they have been treated. It sounds like a nice place to be.

Upholding high standards in the electrical industry includes:

- Doing work to the highest quality you can
- Keeping up-to-date with changing technology and new products
- Offering correct and honest advice
- Sharing knowledge
- Having management and commercial skills
- Exceeding customer expectations
- Working well with others
- Compliance with the requirements of legislation

Community ethics

As an electrician, you will deal with a wide cross-section of people from the community.

Having community ethics is to act in the best interests of the community and it is unethical to act against those best interests.

What this means is that you have a responsibility to ensure that you deal fairly, respectfully and communicate effectively with people from any background, culture or communication needs.

With all clients, you need to be very clear with your language when explaining quotes or discussing potential hazards while you are working. You need to listen to them, so you can provide them with the best solution to their problems and answer their questions correctly.

The table below lists some examples of the possible communication issues you may face, and an example of how you may adjust your communication style to be more effective.

Possible issues	Possible communication style
Native speakers of a different language having difficulties speaking English	Use simpler words and sentences. Speak slowly. Constantly check for understanding. Use an interpreter if needed. Provide a written record of discussion.
Person is on the phone and you cannot see their body language	Listen for tone of voice and attention. Speak clearly and ask for feedback / clarification.
Hearing impaired	Communicate with voice louder than usual, speaking slowly and clearly, or use written communication.
Language barriers between people with different levels of industry experience	Use simple words to explain concepts. Avoid using jargon. Ask for feedback / clarification.
Expectations and prejudices which may lead to false assumptions or stereotyping	Don't be hasty to judge people and jump to incorrect conclusions. Listen carefully to what is said and ask for clarification if required.

Fair, right, and just

As a tradesperson, how you deal with your customers, suppliers, colleagues and other people that you come into contact with, must be fair, right and just.

So, what are the principles of fair, right and just?

It is an inherent trait of humans to recognise when they are being treated fairly, right and justly, and when they are not. Given below are examples. Read through them and pick out the ones where fair and unfair treatment is apparent.

1. Bob invites the boss to his house often for lunch. The boss gives Bob a pay-increase even when Bob does not do his job properly.
2. Lisa and Aaron have a dispute and the case is under arbitration. When Lisa hears that the arbitrator appointed is her uncle Jeremy, she calls him and asks him not to declare the relationship and to help her win the dispute.
3. When Jim is praised for work that Rongo has done, he tells his boss honestly that Rongo deserved the praise.
4. Chen realises that his son, Lee, who is also his employee is slacking off because he thinks he can get away with it. Chen calls Lee into his office and reprimands him and gives him a verbal warning. When Lee doesn't take him seriously, he is issued with a warning letter.
5. Greg collects bits of junk from houses he is renovating and sells them for a profit without informing the owner or the building contractor.

If you said that examples 3 and 4 showed the principles of fair, right and just dealings, you would be correct.

The principles can be summarised as follows:

- Being fair, right and just involves having common rules. Underlying the feeling of fairness has to be some trust and transparency.
- People are treated on an equal footing.
- Give others an equal chance to be heard, whether it's allowing them to share great ideas or to air grievances.
- Give others credit where credit is due.
- Care for the well-being of others.

This is considered so important in business, there is a law called the Fair-Trading Act 1986 which sets out how customers are to be treated by businesses.

EWRB disciplinary processes

Because there sometimes needs to be some way of dealing with those that do not uphold standards, the Electrical Workers Registration Board (EWRB) exists.

If you are a registered electrical worker and a complaint is made about your work or conduct, you will receive a letter informing you of this from the registrar of the Electrical Workers Registration Board (EWRB). This letter will ask you to respond to the complaint.

An investigation will be held. If the complaint is not valid or serious, the outcome may be that no further action needs to be taken.

Otherwise, the board will hold a disciplinary hearing. At the hearing, the Board will listen to evidence from relevant parties and make a decision.

If you are found not guilty, the matter ends there. If you are found guilty, the board may impose penalties, including suspension or removal of registration, orders to cease electrical work or orders to undergo remedial training. You may also be censured or fined.

Part 2: Ethics as an employee

As an employee there are a bunch of things you can do that are good and right, and every employee should be doing. There are, on the other hand, a bunch of things that you should not be doing.

Don't underestimate the power of good ethics in business and in employment. Ruining business by bad habits and lack of good discipline is self-defeating, you hurt yourself.

Doing a great job and looking after the business reputation, your team and other people around you are winning ingredients in a winning formula for you personally.

Attitude and aptitude

'Hire for attitude, train for skills' is a catchphrase in recent years for recruitment.

- Attitude is how you generally think or are feeling about something. For example, if a person has an attitude of disliking work, any amount of skills will not help them perform well at their job.
- Aptitude, on the other hand, is your natural tendency to do something. It is also called skill. Aptitude or skill is not necessarily something you are born with; you can be trained to acquire an aptitude.
- Behaviour is the way in which you act or conduct yourself, especially towards others.

While aptitude and behaviour can be acquired through training and observation, training for attitude is more difficult.



Attitude needs to be changed by the person possessing the attitude.

You need to look at yourself and recognise a negative or positive attitude for what it is and take the necessary steps to change it if it is negative.

As a commercially competent electrical worker, you are expected to display certain attitudes, aptitude and behaviours. Let's look at a few examples.

Example 1: Attitude

Joe makes sure he follows all safety regulations and keeps an eye out for his young trainee, Susan.

He ensures that she also follows all safety procedures and teaches her the finer points. He is always cheerful and is committed to doing quality work.

Joe is displaying an attitude of professionalism, caring for himself and his co-worker, and of coaching.



Example 2: Aptitude

Krishna is often praised on how neatly he lays out the cables, labelling them and ensuring that the workplace is left clean and tidy.

He is also the quickest to complete a job and is able to pick up new technologies fast.

Krishna is displaying an aptitude for his work and he is also displaying an attitude of respect by being neat and tidy.

Example 3: Behaviour

Moa is always polite and respectful towards everyone he interacts with, whether personally, over the phone or by email.

He does not join in the racist or sexist comments some of his co-workers indulge in. He takes responsibility for all his actions, and avoids any conflicts of interest or bias.

Moa's behaviour is professional.

Let's have a look at various ways in which you can carry out ethical work practices as an employee.

Workplace behaviour

Every company has some standards for behaviour at work.

Usually, the minimum expected conduct is summarised in job descriptions or during the interview process. Behaviour guidelines typically address topics, such as harassment, dress codes and workplace language.

Workers who don't follow codes of conduct may receive written and verbal warnings, and ultimately, if the behaviour doesn't change, be dismissed.

Also know that under employment law, employees who behave badly outside of work may be at risk of dismissal if their actions can be linked back to their work and cause concern for their employer.

But, if your behaviour is good, and you are following what is required of you, then things should go well for you.

Some examples of bad work behaviours are:

- Considering the safety of others to be their own responsibility
- Personal phone calls, social media and texting while at work
- Using language that is not appropriate
- Booking time that you are not working
- Using work supplies for home
- Sharing clients' information with other people

Some examples of good work behaviours are:

- Having an appearance that upholds the company in a good light
- Being reliable and self-motivated to get the job done
- Working well with others
- Arriving to work on time
- Filling out time sheets accurately
- Caring that customers are satisfied with what you are doing



Personal accountability

Being accountable means showing up on scheduled workdays, as well as arriving on time and putting in an honest effort while on the job.

People with a solid work ethic and character demonstrate a willingness to not only ensure the job is done, but also accept responsibility for the results - good or bad.



Things go wrong for all of us at some point, how we deal with it makes all the difference.

Workers who exhibit accountability are honest when things go wrong, then work toward a resolution while remaining professional all the while. They don't just shrug and say that it's not their fault, or worse, that it's not their job.

Good time keeping and punctuality

Good timekeeping shows that you are organised and can be relied on. Constant lateness is an undesirable pattern. When this happens, you begin to blame outside circumstances and lose focus on potential solutions. If you are constantly late for work, you might even lose your job.

Being punctual helps build trust and credibility, it is being honest.

When you make an appointment, you are making a commitment. Being on time to work or to a job is important, don't underestimate how important it is, put effort in to it.

To maintain a good workflow requires a good sense of timing. It is necessary to be able to predict possible obstacles to a job and adapt to maintain the job timeline.

Consistently meeting your commitments and being punctual builds up trust in you and shows that you are a valuable member of the team.



Use of electronic devices

Cell phones are an example of something that can be a time keeping irritation to an employer or customer, and some workers have lost their jobs over private cell phone use at work.

Most businesses frown on the use of electronic devices for personal use while on the clock.

It is important that you familiarise yourself with your organisation's policies for usage of electronic devices during work time.

How would you feel?

You have had to get a plumber in to fix your hot water cylinder at home. You have had to organise the time off work to be home while he does the job. As you are new to your job, you don't have any leave, so you have had to take time off as leave without pay.

The plumber was due to start the job at 8:30am but doesn't manage to get there until 8:44am. He gets started and soon his phone goes off. He stops work, looks at his phone and laughs and sends a text. A few minutes later he gets a reply and he stops work to exchange a few more texts.

At smoko, he is on social media, which is fine, but he gets engrossed and ends up having a long smoko. He gets back into the job ten minutes late, stops work for a few more texts and a phone call and finishes the job at 1.40pm. You figure, all up, he spent about 35 minutes on his phone during the job.

When you get this bill, he has charged you from 8:30am until 2:00pm. Not only are you paying for him to work before and after he actually did, but for a significant amount of time that he was using his phone, and his charge out rate is \$85 per hour, about five times what you are getting.

To be blunt, he is stealing from you and you have every right to be pretty unhappy and not pay him for when he wasn't working *. He would probably lose work for his company as you more than likely will find someone else who gives value for money next time.

*You will have to work for over four hours just to pay for the time he wasn't working that he charged you for.

If your boss is paying for your time, how should you treat him? If his customers are paying for you, how are you treating them?

Integrity

A key component to workplace ethics and behaviour is integrity, or in other words, being honest and being reliable at doing the right thing.

Filling out time-sheets accurately, respecting clients' privacy and charging reasonable rates are all examples of working with integrity.

Workers with integrity also avoid gossip and sneakiness while on the job, they gain trust because they are trustworthy.

Teamwork

A vital aspect of the workplace is working well with others. That includes everyone from peers to supervisors to customers.

As a member of a team, it is very important to realise that the actions of every individual will impact on the team as a whole.

Think about how you would feel if you worked with someone who showed the following habits:



- Disorganised
- Late
- Does not bring the correct tools and equipment
- Is sick every day the surf is good
- Does not use safety gear
- Leaves the workplace in a mess
- Cannot be communicated with, because they have not turned on the radio or mobile
- Does not finish a job (manage their workload/work outcomes) in the designated time, thus holding everyone else up.
- Is not teachable and pretends they know things when they don't because they want to look better than they are.

Obviously, a good team worker is going to do the opposite of all that.



If you are affecting the boss's ability to feed his family, you can bet you won't be around for long.



In many instances, those who are not considered “team players” can face termination because teamwork is an important requirement for employees.

While not all employees always like each other, they do need to set aside their personal or even work-related differences to work towards a larger goal.

On the other hand, those who work well with others often can advance on that aspect alone, with teamwork sometimes even outweighing performance.

Quite simply, the way you work affects everyone else, a great team member will:

- Fulfil work requirements as on time as possible
- Contribute actively to the team
- Encourage, acknowledge and act upon constructive feedback
- Identify and carry out their responsibilities
- Communicate well with others about work issues
- Provide support to other team members
- Share information relevant about the work with co-workers

Skills and competency

Obviously as new apprentice you may not have a lot of the skills needed for the job, yet. But hopefully that will change fairly quickly as you apply yourself to your study and your daily work.

To work towards competency there are some choices that you can make in your work life to help being competent in what you do, such as:

- Working in a way that is safe for yourself and others
- Interacting professionally with other tradespeople and clients
- Getting the job done on time wherever possible
- Giving full attention when being given instructions
- Always carrying out proper testing of electrical work
- Learning to diagnose faults in electrical systems and equipment

In summary

To be great in your job as a tradesman and a team player, the following points are a great start:

- Use good time management
 - Have a tidy work area, paperwork sorted, day planned effectively, learn to say no so that you are not over-committing.
- Meet deadlines
 - Finish projects on time and revise timelines only when unavoidable.
- Be punctual
 - Arrive to work on time, attend meetings.
- Use electronic devices appropriately
 - Don't use personal devices in work time, keep the phone on vibrate if appropriate in the workplace, use a quiet voice indoors on the phone or in the office and turn phones off in meetings.
- Do not have unexplained or unentitled absences
 - Only take sick days when you are actually ill. Communicate sick days with the appropriate people.
- Be Honest about breaks
 - Take agreed time for breaks, don't take longer breaks than agreed.
- Plan personal appointments
 - Schedule personal appointments for outside work hours where possible.



The Skills Organisation
0508 SKILLS (0508 754 557)
skills.org.nz