If we have the necessary qualifications and perform our professional responsibilities with integrity, there is not much more a client or employer can ask.

The Code of Ethics for American Welding Society certified personnel is included in the required body of knowledge for all levels of AWS welding inspector certification. I do not think I am giving away any secrets when I tell you that questions involving the Code of Ethics are typically found on the Certified Welding Inspector (CWI) and Senior Certified Welding Inspector (SCWI) examinations.

The Code of Ethics can be found in Section 8 of QC1, Standard for AWS Certification of Welding Inspectors. The opening paragraph states the purpose, goals, and, in the event of confirmed violations, a general description of possible sanctions for certified inspectors participating in unauthorized practices.

Paragraph 8.1, titled “Integrity,” states the Certified Associate Welding Inspector (CAWI), CWI, or SCWI “shall act with complete integrity in professional matters.”

My dictionary defines integrity as, “strict adherence to a code of moral values, artistic principles, or other standards; complete sincerity or honesty.” BINGO! If we have the necessary qualifications and perform our professional responsibilities with integrity, there is not much more a client or employer can ask.

Paragraph 8.2, “Responsibility to the Public,” requires the certified person to act in a manner that will “preserve the health and well-being of the public.” This shall be done by performing their required duties conscientiously and impartially to the fullest extent of his/her moral and civic responsibility and qualification. Among the requirements are that SCWIs, CWIs, and CAWIs shall

- Always present credentials upon request.
- Neither misrepresent their level of certification nor the current status of that certification. They shall not alter or otherwise falsify certification documents, nor give false verbal or written testimony of current certification status.

Certified personnel also have a responsibility to the public to “be completely objective, thorough, and factual in any written reports.” This shall include all relevant or pertinent testimony in their reports and communications.

The inspector is also required to sign only for work that he/she has inspected or over which he/she has had direct supervision.

Finally, the CWI’s responsibility to the public requires him/her to “neither associate with nor knowingly participate in a fraudulent or dishonest venture.”

We have enumerated several general and specific “thou shalls” and “thou shalt nots.” These are all examples of actions that demonstrate integrity. Because AWS certification is one of the credentials with which we make our living, it is incumbent upon each of us to report violations of the Code of Ethics as well as any unauthorized practices of which we become aware. The failure of one CWI to maintain his/her integrity reflects poorly upon all CWIs. While “one bad apple,” in this case, does not “spoil the barrel,” it certainly makes all the other apples suspect.

We have all worked hard for our certifications and must not allow a few errant individuals to compromise and denigrate this validation of our accomplishments.