

# Russell Hamilton

## Comments on Specific Operator Training Regarding Ethics

The goal of amending rules for Water and Wastewater Professionals should be carefully considered before imposing new requirements. In broad terms, a lecture or presentation alone seldom teaches the true foundation of integrity and ethical behavior. Ethics and integrity cannot be forced upon the target audience through additional rules or training mandates.

Few would disagree that well-designed, focused training can have a positive impact. However, believing that simply increasing training hours or requiring specifics in certain areas will improve ethical behavior is questionable. Just like having a speed limit on roadways does not keep everyone from speeding. Many unethical actions happen not because people are "bad," but because they haven't fully considered the ethical implications of their decisions. Ethics training should help individuals think through dilemmas, not just memorize which actions to avoid.

Rather than requiring separate or additional hours of classroom instruction, an alternative could be strengthening the ethics component within the existing Management or Leadership style courses. Integrating ethics discussions into practical, job-related scenarios might achieve the desired results more effectively than a formal rule change or adding content for a lecture series.

It is also important to recognize that training amendments or additions do not automatically result in better behavior. Forcing employees to sit through extended ethics presentations may increase frustration without improving understanding. Ethical decision-making develops through discussion, mentorship, and organizational culture—not repetition of material.

Furthermore, what is considered "fair," "right," or "just" differs among individuals and workplaces. Trying to "reprogram" moral reasoning in two, four, or even eight training sessions is unrealistic. Genuine ethical development takes time, reflection, and ongoing example-setting by leadership. Not implying that ethics should be ignored.

If additional ethics training is to be pursued, there should be a clear and measurable standard for evaluating its effectiveness. How will success be defined? Will improvements be reflected in compliance records, interactions with state personnel, or employee conduct? Without clear metrics, the value of such changes will remain uncertain.

In summary, ethics training can play a supportive role, but it should not be viewed as a cure-all. Ethics is best developed through leadership example, open discussion, and a culture that rewards honesty and responsibility. Rules may set expectations—but it is the daily actions of individuals and supervisors that truly shape ethical behavior within the water and wastewater profession.

If this proposed rule change moves forward, I believe two hours of renewal credit is sufficient.

L. Russell Hamilton  
Executive Director  
Texas Water Utilities Association