

AIA Code of Ethics

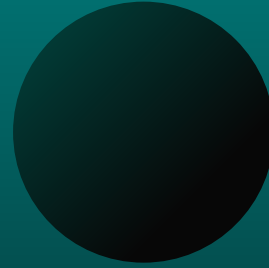
Summary based on the Code of Ethics & Professional Conduct (2024)

10/14/2025

By: Steven Berg

Three Tiers of Statements

1. Canons - broad principles
2. Ethical standards - aspirational goals
3. Rules of Conduct - mandatory - can lead to disciplinary action



Canon I - General Obligations

1. Rule 1.401 - Zero form of Harassment or Discrimination
 - Gender, age, race, religion, sexual orientation, etc...
 - Maintains equality and inclusivity
 2. Rule 1.402 - Respecting the Rights of Others
 - Within and outside of the workplace, architects must avoid conduct showing wanton disregard for the rights of others
 - Based on a “reasonable person”
 3. Rule 1.403 - No Design for Execution Spaces
 - Members are not allowed to design spaces intended for a person’s execution or death - chambers, etc...
 4. Rule 1.404 - No Design for Torture or Solitary Confinement
 - Members shall abstain from designing spaces intended to inflict physical or psychological harm
 - 22 hours or more per day without human contact
 - Excess of 15 consecutive days
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Canon II - Public Obligations

1. Rule 2.101 - Obeying the Law
 - Members must follow local, state, or federal laws within their professional work - including copyright
 2. Rule 2.102 - No Bribery or Forced Influence
 - Members cannot offer, or solicit payments or gifts to public officials in an effort to sway decisions
 3. Rule 2.103 - No Improper Gifts While in Public
 - Members are not allowed to accept any form of compensation that would affect judgement
 4. Rule 2.104 - No Fraud
 - In and out of the office
 - Never present false statements for personal gain
 - Maintain truth and integrity
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Canon II - Public Obligations (Cont...)

1. Rule 2.105 - Unsafe or Illegal Decisions
 - If you notice a client breaking the law you must act
 - Advise against it, refuse consent, report to authorities
 2. Rule 2.106 - No Assistance in Crime
 - Members cannot assist clients in illegal acts in which they can reason
 3. Rule 2.301 - Disclosure in Public Statements
 - When speaking publicly - must be transparent and reveal interests and any forms of compensation
 4. Rule 2.401 - Environmental Impacts for Clients
 - Must know how your design affects the environment
 - Important to encourage sustainable choices with every client
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Canon III - Obligations to the Client

1. Rule 3.101 - Following Applicable Laws
 - Ensure your work complies with codes and regulations - must be up to date on new versions
 - Seek expert opinion if unsure
 2. Rule 3.102 - Competence Practice
 - Know what you are qualified to do - don't accept work that is out of your professional capacity
 - Use consultants where necessary
 3. Rule 3.103 - Consent for Changes
 - Do not alter design, goals, or scope without approval from the client
 4. Rule 3.201 - Avoid Conflict of Interest
 - Reveal all personal or financial interest that could affect any judgement
 - Those who cannot communicate these aspects must ensure that disclosure is met by other means
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Canon III - Obligations to the Client (Cont..)

1. Rule 3.202 - Impartial Contract Administration
 - Stay true to architects professional responsibilities
 - Act fairly without any favoritism revolving around contracts and payment
 2. Rule 3.301 - No False Promises
 - Don't be dishonest and mislead clients into false project outcomes or costs
 3. Rule 3.401 - Client Confidentiality
 - Keep confidential information private
 - Don't share anything without consent or legal duty
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Canon IV - Obligations to the Profession

1. Rule 4.101 - Report Serious Violations
 - Keep honesty in the profession and keep true to the National Ethics Council
 - Report any know breaches by other members
 2. Rule 4.102 - Responsible Control of Signature
 - Don't sign or seal any work you have not done or directed
 3. Rule 4.103 - Truthful Statements
 - Don't knowingly make false statements about your own work or others
 4. Rule 4.201 - Honesty
 - Members must abstain from being deceptive or misleading
 - Always credit team members and roles accurately
 - Represent qualifications and experience truthfully
 5. Rule 4.202 - Supervise Ethically
 - Ensure everyone (staff, consultants...) follows AIA code
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Canon V - Obligations to Colleagues

1. Rule 5.101 - Equity and Respect
 - Keep fair, respectful, and supportive workplaces
 2. Rule 5.201 - License Support
 - Keep all documents and licences up to date
 - Help everyone document and complete licence requirements
 3. Rule 5.301 - Credit
 - Recognize contributions of employees, associates, and colleagues
 4. Rule 5.302 - Materials
 - Keep all firm owned materials, tools, designs, reports, and data within the firm - Don't take without permission
 5. Rule 5.303 - Copies
 - Allow departing employees must have access to non-confidential examples and copies of their own work - can't withhold
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Canon VI - Environmental Obligations

1. Rule 6.501 - Environmental Responsibility

- Discuss environmental impacts of every design decision with the client
- Design for a cleaner future - promote the use of sustainable and long term ecological improvement

Application, Enforcement, and Amendment

- Conduct applies to professional activities of all members within the AIA
- Enforcement is administered through a National Ethics Council
 - Appointed by the AIA Board of Directors
- Formal charges are filed with the National Ethics Council
- Penalties include: abomination, censure, suspension or termination of membership
 - All proceedings are confidential
 - Appeal procedures are available
- The Conduct may be amended by the delegates at the AIA's annual business meeting
 - Also can be amended by the AIA Board of Directors upon a $\frac{2}{3}$ vote of the entire board

Source:

- <https://www.aia.org/code-ethics-professional-conduct>

Ethics Case Study

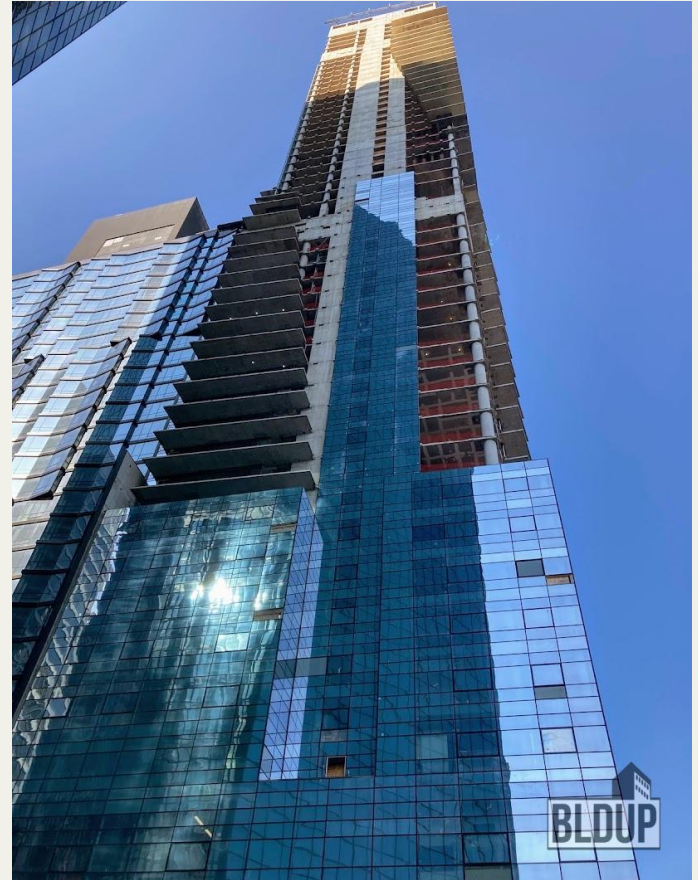
1 Seaport Tower (161 Maiden Lane, NYC)

Design V

Professor LoPiccolo

10/14/2025

By: Steven Berg



Case Summary

- The 1 Seaport Tower is located on a prime piece of real estate that dominates the lower manhattan skyline. This project was supposed to be a 58 story luxury residential skyscraper but now sits as an unfinished reminder of how precise and through construction must be especially when designing skyscrapers. This project was developed by the Fortis Property Group and designed by Hill West Architects. During the construction phase in 2017 the building began to lean several inches northward due to an uneven settlement in the foundation. The developer had opted to cut corners in an effort to save money on foundation strategy. The original design (like all other skyscrapers) called for a deep foundation which includes driving long poles deep into the earth to support such a tall narrow structure. The method they used was soil improvement which is basically treating the soil underneath the building with chemicals and cement to improve its compressive strength - this decision saved 6 million dollars but overall costed a life and the project as a whole. Once construction was halted there was evidently a legal war between developers and contractors for who was at fault. This case overall underscores the importance in public safety, transparency, and ethical lapses - all key principles highlighted in the AIA Code of Ethics. It stands today as a reminder to never prioritize cost and schedule over safety and integrity.

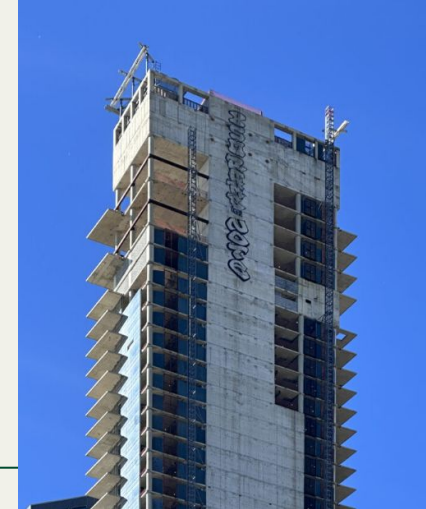
Key Findings

- Engineering Oversight: The switch of foundation type was not modeled and tested thoroughly. Of course buildings have been constructed with the soil treating before but it involves more work. Also designing a tower that was meant to “pierce the clouds” should have been done with a foundation method that was fully backed and tested. The lack of geotechnical testing and structural modeling violates professional standards for due diligence.
- Ethical Negligence: No one reported the change in foundation design to the AIA. Construction also continued after they noticed a slight lean as each story was added. Cost cutting prioritizing financial gain over safety and long term stability is a clear violation of:
- AIA Rule: 4.101 (Reporting Serious Violations) , 3.102 (Competency Practice), 2.105 (Unsafe or Illegal Decisions), 2.301 (Disclosure in Public Statements)



Key Findings (Cont...)

- Communication: Lack of communication and documentation of reports and data between structural engineers, architects, and developers led to a lack of shared responsibility
 - AIA Rule 4.103 (Truthful Statements)
- Safety Mismanagement: The worker death shows failure to implement OSHA safety standards. One death and one serious injury came from the overall construction of this project which simply shows that there was not a lot of attention to safety measures - the person who plummeted 29 stories fell through an unmarked hole in the floor while a crane was in operation on the same level. The project was simply stopped and resumed after one fine.
- Public Trust: The leaning tower became a published symbol of negligence; contributing to the damage of the professions reputation
 - AIA Rule 4.101 (Report Serious Violations)

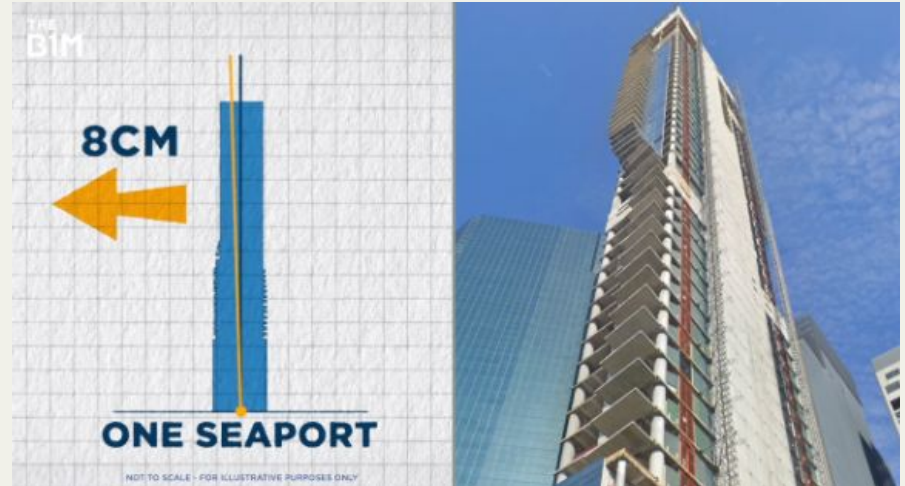


Major Problems

- Misalignment and differential settlement - The structure was reported to lean 3 inches northwards relative to vertical because it was not anchored to deep rock
- Engineers pointed out that the building had a small footprint - 1:15 ratio - needed anchored piles because thin skyscrapers are susceptible to wind - Owner Louis Kestenbaum refused
- After 44 year old worker plummeted to death construction continued and they were only fined \$10,000 - easily avoidable - workers were on a level that a crane was operating on
- Original contracting group was from Europe - didn't know anything about building in NYC, had no connections so work was slow and a lot of the budget went to overtime work
- Contractor sued project owner because they cheated out on construction costs - led to a counter sue because building conditions were unsafe
- Glass facade started at bottom of structure, due to lean they were breaking and popping out of place
- New contractor was hired, said it was safe to continue laying glass on facade, just had to accommodate for the lean

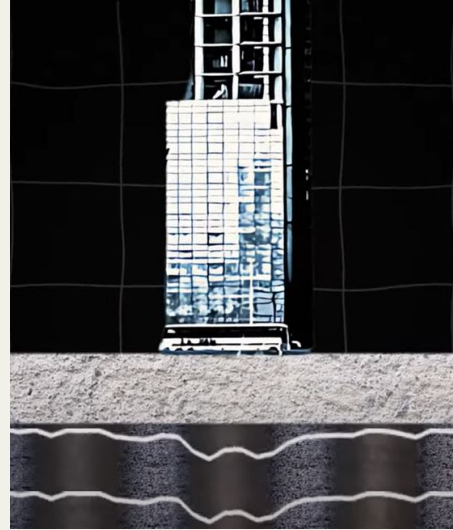
Major Problems (Cont...)

- In 2019 Fortis was sued by Pizzarotti (contractor) for improper choices that led to the lean
- Fortis counter sued and accused Pizzarotti for failure to allow for settlement and improper slab pouring
- Rushed construction in an effort to keep buyers contracts
- Fortis got more money from MACK Real Estate to finish project - didn't tell them about the lean - thought it could be fixed (Rule 4.201 Honesty)
- Fortis was losing money on all of the lawsuits and eventually was missing payments for the projects which led to more lawsuits from sponsors and money lenders
- Building flagged by FDNY inspectors - fire suppression system was nonfunctional



Conclusion

- Proceeding: The choice to save costs in foundation construction led to long-term structural risk
 - Fixing the lean is more expensive in the long run and more disruptive
 - If the building were to be completed, no one would want to pay the original premium price they were paying for the luxury units
 - Liability: developer must choose between abandoning project, fixing the lean, demolishing the building, or selling the land
 - In order to fix the lean they would need a lot more money to mitigate the problem, and pay off loans and lawsuits - every option having legal and financial risk
 - Feasibility: Even if technical remediation was possible such as underpinnings, micropiles, deep anchors, and partial demolition, the cost may exceed the value of the completed design
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Recommendations

- Structural and geotechnical assessment - engage a neutral third party to perform a diagnostics test on the current conditions of the building - the foundation and the lean
- Compare remediation options with cost/benefit - re-do the foundation to what it was supposed to be, partial demolition, controlled progressed construction
- Stabilize the structure immediately - to limit further damage and safety concern, spend the money on fixing the lean
- Fix safety concerns - fix fire suspension, sidewalk cover, worker conditions, and overall signage
- Explore partial downscaling options
- Negotiate with lenders and creditors
- Full reset - demolition and rebuild

Takeaways

- Never cut corners especially in large scale construction
- Safety measures always trump over potential profit
- When working in high risk areas, make sure to have a team that are experts
- Spending money on initial construction costs that ensure safety will also ensure the longevity of the building
- Always be open and honest with all parties involved in the construction process
 - Never hide anything from anyone especially if they join the project later on
 - Always keep the public and clients in the loop - if clients find out bad news from the public it never ends well
- Always follow safety measures - even the small ones

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