

OREGON DPSST
ETHICS BULLETIN

Volume No. 35



The Board on Public Safety Standards and Training (BPSST) has the legislative mandate to establish and enforce the physical, mental, and moral fitness standards for all law enforcement officers, telecommunicators and emergency medical dispatchers in the state. This requirement also defines the procedure for the Department and Board to use when denying or revoking certification of an officer, telecommunicator or emergency medical dispatcher who has fallen below the moral fitness standards.

The Ethics Bulletin is published to provide insight into the types of misconduct that could result in revocation or denial of certification. The following cases of misconduct resulted in **revocation** of certifications by DPSST in **July 2006**.

The Department continues to ensure that certified public safety officers and those seeking certification who abuse the public's trust will be held accountable for their actions.

Case 1

Officer A was discharged for cause after an internal investigation revealed that he had been untruthful regarding his involvement in investigating a shooting. In this case, while on sick leave, Officer A heard about the shooting, drove to the scene, and told officers that he had been assigned to investigate the shooting. Officer A was issued a Notice of Intent to Revoke Certification and made a timely request for a hearing. During an unrelated criminal proceeding, Officer A voluntarily signed a Stipulated Order Revoking Certifications. Officer A's conduct ended his eight-year career. **Officer A's Basic Police Certification was Revoked.**

Case 2

Officer B was arrested and convicted of DUII, which was treated by the court as a diversion. Later, Officer B was arrested and convicted of a second DUII. The crime of DUII is a discretionary disqualifier, for purposes of revocation action. Officer B was advised that his case would go before the Corrections Policy Committee for review. Officer B voluntarily chose to sign a Stipulated Order Revoking Certifications. Officer B's conduct ended his six-year career. **Officer B's Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Parole and Probation Certifications were Revoked.**

Case 3

Officer C resigned after an internal investigation revealed that she had a sexual relationship with an inmate. Officer C was advised that her case would go before the Corrections Policy Committee for review. Officer C voluntarily chose to sign a Stipulated Order Revoking Certifications. Officer B's conduct ended her three-year career. **Officer C's Basic Corrections Certification was Revoked.**

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Our thanks for comments from Board Member **Eric Swanson**,
Administrator for the Tillamook County Emergency Communications District

WHERE WILL YOU STAND?

On November 8, 2001, people were shocked when Enron, one of America's hottest companies, admitted to using fraudulent accounting practices that had inflated its income figures by hundreds of millions of dollars. Less than a month later, Enron filed the largest bankruptcy claim in American history. In early 2002, the Justice Department launched a criminal investigation into the company's business practices. Enron went belly-up, employees' retirement savings were all but wiped out, and millions of investors lost a total of more than \$60 billion. Enron Execs were indicted, and some will be trading in their Armani suits for prison blues. I wouldn't have believed it, except I saw it myself. Enron's *Official Code of Ethics*. It's more than just a fancy cover and a couple of blank pages; it is an actual 65 page document that outlines the ethical standards of Enron. According to Michael Josephson, a Los Angeles based ethicist, "Enron had one of the best codes of ethics. They posted it. They made a big deal about it. Only they didn't really mean it". Enron's business ethics policy was once considered the model for all business ethics policies, but what was put down on paper wasn't put into practice.

Each of us in the public safety profession has taken an oath from our own **Code of Ethics** – an oath to conduct both our personal and professional lives in a manner which is above reproach.

Learning to appropriately respond to, and address ethical dilemmas is another essential skill that public safety professionals must learn. Failure to master this skill may have devastating consequences on the career and life of the public safety officer and his or her family. Upholding our Code of Ethics requires *practice* so that you are prepared to respond to an ethical dilemma, which may have lifelong implications.

In the book *The Power of Ethical Management*, the authors provide "Ethics Check Questions" for making ethical decisions:

1. Is it legal? Will my actions violate any law, codes, or constitutions?
2. Is it balanced? Is my decision fair to everyone concerned?
3. How will I feel about myself? Will my actions withstand public scrutiny?

The public safety officers in the preceding pages have lost their professional certifications due to a lapse in ethical conduct and failure to adhere to their Code of Ethics. Their lapses did not result from not *knowing* the right thing to do; it was from not *choosing* the right thing to do.

Kenneth Lay, the founder of Enron, died of a heart attack on July 5th. Lay, 64, faced the prospect of spending the rest of his life in prison after being found guilty of fraud and conspiracy in the Enron trial in May. Lay ascended from near-poverty as a minister's son in Missouri to the pinnacle of corporate America, only to tumble into disgrace. History will not remember Lay for his outstanding service to our country while in the United States Navy; nor will it remember him for his generous philanthropy. Instead, Kenneth Lay's legacy forever will be linked to corporate greed and corruption.

Martin Luther King, Jr. once said "*The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of comfort and convenience, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy.*" Where will you stand?

Administrator Swanson has served in public safety for over 20 years. Administrator Swanson is an Oregon Certified and Nationally Registered Paramedic and served as the Chief Investigator for the Oregon State EMS Office for three years, where he oversaw all professional standards investigations. He is the Reserve Commander at the Tillamook County Sheriff's Office and a member of the Tillamook Hospital Trauma Team. He is the author of the Law Enforcement Field Guide™ and co-author of the Homeland Security Field Guide™. He serves on the Board on Public Safety Standards and Training representing telecommunications and is the Chair of the Telecommunications Policy Committee. Administrator Swanson holds a Bachelor's of Business Administration Degree and DPSST Executive Certification.

For more information, or to contact Administrator Swanson, please email him at lawman@wcn.net

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