

interior spaces. Interior designers develop programs for clients based on the varied needs of the end user. Design professionals provide project management and execute technical documents for construction, such as drawings and specifications. The interior designers of today must be able to perform multiple tasks in which they exercise a high level of independent judgment and know local, state, and national codes. They must be able to negotiate contracts, schedule projects, budget projects, and coordinate work in progress. No matter what the project, they must be capable of identifying problems, analyzing requirements, and making realistic assessments, all within the confines of code, budget, and time constraints. Interior designers may work as independent consultants or as a part of a design team with other design professionals.

Health and Safety in the Design Context

Whatever the role of the interior designer today, it is paramount to the profession that the health and safety of the public be protected at all times. Interior designers protect the health and safety of the public by being aware of the consequences of each of their choices and by maintaining a direct knowledge of local, state, and national codes. For instance, when interior designers plan an exit route from an interior core space to a building exit system and design it in compliance with code, they are protecting the health and safety of the public who occupy or use the space. When interior designers demonstrate their ability to know where and how to place grab bars in handicap toilet rooms, or design an accessible counter where reach and approach are correct, they are protecting the health and safety of the public who use those facilities. These are not design elements that the designer can guess about or leave to chance. Before designers can approach them properly, they must possess a base of knowledge that they can access and apply.

In the last *Analysis for the Interior Design Profession* (1998) conducted for the NCIDQ, commercial designers expressed their opinion that some of the most important health and safety issues facing interior designers in the commercial field today were field survey skills, specification writing skills, knowledge of building codes, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and flammability and testing standards. When asked how interior designers create a safe and effective design solution, they responded that design professionals needed to have a knowledge base in the following areas.

NCIDQ LIST OF KEY KNOWLEDGE AREAS FOR INTERIOR DESIGNERS

- Verbal communication and basic language skills
- Working drawings
- Space-planning principles
- Human factors (ergonomics)
- Professional ethics
- Barrier-free design
- Building codes
- Project management
- Interior construction
- Contract specifications

SELF-REGULATION: ETHICS

The profession of interior design is like any other. No matter how much legislation regulates the field, a profession must still police its own practitioners. Most interior design professional associations have codes of ethics. Most regulatory boards have adopted these or their own codes of ethics for their registrants. While these codes of ethics are different for each group or organization, they are usually written to protect the welfare of the public the profession serves. Codes of ethics may deal with disclosure to a client; for instance, a code of ethics may require that the interior designer disclose a financial interest in a company that may be bidding on the client's project. Codes of ethics may cover truth in advertising. For example, a code of ethics may provide that interior designers are subject to sanctions when they tell a client that they are capable of working on projects that require special knowledge, even though they have never done work in that particular area.

Codes of ethics adopted by the design profession play a key role in ensuring the honesty or integrity of the marketplace. In addition, regulatory boards use them as an additional method of protecting the public from unscrupulous practitioners, those who live up to the letter of the law as set out in the