



# NEWSLETTER

CONSULTING ENGINEERS ASSOCIATES 2005 LTD.

## *Standard of Care in Engineering Practices: What is Expected from an Engineer?*



Across the Caribbean, the performance of engineering works is often judged by outcomes, but the true measure of professionalism lies in whether the engineer met the Standard of Care.

This principle defines the level of skill, diligence, and judgment expected of a reasonably competent engineer operating under similar circumstances. It is not a standard of perfection, but one of reasonableness, shaped by professional norms, available resources, and the realities of practice within small island developing states.

### ***Duty to the Public and the Built Environment***

In the Caribbean context, engineering decisions carry heightened significance. Infrastructure must withstand not only daily use, but also extreme weather events, coastal exposure, and evolving environmental pressures.

The duty of care therefore extends beyond the client to the wider public, whose safety and livelihoods depend on the resilience of buildings, roads, drainage systems, and utilities.

Engineers are expected to apply sound technical judgment, adhere to established standards, and act with diligence and integrity. This includes staying current with regional codes, adapting to local material constraints, and recognizing when additional expertise is required.

Failure to meet these expectations does not simply affect project outcomes, it can have long-term consequences for communities and national development.

### ***The Line Between Error and Negligence***

Engineering within the Caribbean is often undertaken in environments where data may be limited, resources constrained, and conditions unpredictable. As such, the profession inherently involves uncertainty and informed judgment.

An engineer is not negligent simply because a project outcome is imperfect. Rather, negligence arises when the level of care and skill falls below what would reasonably be expected.

Errors that occur despite due diligence such as unforeseen ground conditions or incomplete site data may fall within acceptable professional limits. However, failures resulting from inadequate analysis, disregard for established standards, or insufficient supervision represent a clear breach of duty.

The Standard of Care does not demand flawless execution it demands; competent, informed, and responsible decision-making.



## Context Defines Reasonableness

Across Caribbean nations, expectations may vary depending on:

- Local regulations and building codes
- Availability of materials and technical resources
- Project scale and complexity
- Exposure to environmental risks such as flooding, erosion, and hurricanes

What is considered reasonable in one jurisdiction may differ in another. Engineers must therefore design and make decisions that are appropriate to the local context, rather than relying solely on international norms that may not fully account for regional realities.

## Ethics and the Obligation to Remain Competent

At the same time, the Caribbean engineering landscape is evolving. Climate adaptation, sustainable design, and resilience planning are becoming central to modern practice. This places a continuous obligation on engineers to remain competent through ongoing professional development.

Maintaining the Standard of Care therefore requires not only technical expertise, but also a commitment to lifelong learning and ethical responsibility.

### **When the Standard is Breached**

When engineering failures occur within the region, the assessment of responsibility follows a consistent principle: comparison with the actions of a reasonably prudent engineer under similar Caribbean conditions.

Conversely, where decisions were made responsibly based on available information and accepted regional practice, errors may be deemed non-negligent.

This distinction reinforces a key principle: accountability in engineering is determined not solely by outcome, but by the quality of professional judgment applied.

### **Conclusion: Upholding Trust Across the Region**

The Standard of Care is more than a legal concept, it is the foundation of responsible engineering practice across the Caribbean.

In a region facing increasing environmental challenges and infrastructure demands, engineers are not expected to be infallible, but they are expected to act with competence, diligence, and integrity.

Every project contributes to public trust. That trust is sustained when engineering decisions consistently reflect the highest standards of professional responsibility.

## The CEAL 2005 Perspective

At CEAL 2005, the Standard of Care guides every aspect of our work across the Caribbean. Our approach integrates disciplined engineering practice, adherence to both local and regional standards, and a strong emphasis on resilience and sustainability.

Through rigorous review processes and accountable decision-making, we ensure that every project meets the level of care required to protect both our clients and the communities they serve.

