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Ethics in Policy Advice: Risk Assessment, Nuclear Energy, and Nuclear Weapons

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Ethics in policy advice is about integrity and responsibility. Science-based policy advice regarding risk assessment, nuclear energy, and nuclear weapons is complex and implicit assumptions can skew seemingly objective analyses. Drawing on experience within the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and other science advisory activities, general principles of policy advice are articulated and those principles are applied to these three areas with some examples of ethical issues arising for physicists and other scientists addressing these topics. Beyond implicit narratives underlying analyses, explicit ethical questions about advising on nuclear weapons are also examined.