

## Environmental engineer asked to disregard some negative sampling data

This last dilemma is prevalent in the environmental consulting industry: what happens when you find data that would condemn your client, but your employer ignores the results or asks you to not report them so that they can keep the client's business.

The former happens quite a bit more than you would think since most private companies that hire a consultant to investigate a site have some motive in mind for the site (either to develop it or try and make sure they did not have anything to do with it.) This can create a dilemma for the engineer that is responsible for the investigation since these contracts are usually quite lucrative, and most clients will keep using your company if they get results that are favorable. This can lead to some serious pressure on the consultants to get the result that makes the client the most happy, whether it is the right answer or not. Getting and keeping business contracts in the environmental work is a cutthroat place and set of circumstances. Some clients seed a contract with language guaranteeing further work only if the findings favor them, and a lot of those types of contracts become VERY lucrative. This pressure can take the form of engineers being asked to either disregard unfavorable/results from analyses to flat out falsifying the data to make the results happen. This sort of situation has occurred many times and usually it is found out later when the remediation system is found to have failed, sometimes to the detriment of people's lives. This sort of behavior does not restrain itself to the private side of industry, regulators are just as likely to ask for certain results, or blatantly tell you what should be the answers to the questions that they ask. Such regulators have asked consultants to pass sites that are not clean as such so that they would appear to be doing their jobs and continue to be funded as well. This is at heart a serious ethical dilemma.