



## AGTA RELEASES REVISED CODE OF ETHICS

Dallas, Texas, July 8, 2015 - Since its inception in 1981, knowledge, integrity and ethics has been the foundation of the American Gem Trade Association. In 1983, AGTA codified these standards in its first *Code of Ethics and Fair Business Practices*. This document established the most demanding standards for professional conduct, not just in the colored gemstone and cultured pearl trade, but in the entire jewelry industry.

The cornerstone of this *Code of Ethics* was expertise in gemstones, and embodied the tenant that every AGTA member must have an absolute commitment to protect and to ensure the integrity of our products at all levels of the supply chain, from mine to consumer, by providing full and complete disclosure of all gemstone enhancements. To support this commitment, the AGTA, in 1985, developed the *Gemstone Information Manual* (GIM, now in its 14<sup>th</sup> printing). This manual specified treatments and terminology for the entire spectrum of gemstones and cultured pearls, and has been endorsed by the entire jewelry industry as the standard for informing and protecting both industry members and consumers.

Just as our industry has continued to evolve so has the AGTA's *Code of Ethics and Fair Business Practices*. Today, our industry continues to define and illustrate both ethical and responsible business practices throughout the entire supply chain and for thirty-two years the best of these practices have been embodied in the AGTA *Code of Ethics*. Not only does AGTA strive to incorporate these practices into their businesses, but additionally we require each and every member - gemstone traders, manufacturers, designers and retailers - to reaffirm their commitment to these practices as a requirement of membership in the Association. Doing so ensures that the AGTA member supply chain, from mine to consumer, has the highest ethical commitment in the trade.

By annually signing the *Code of Ethics* commitment document, every member reaffirms their pledge to:

- 1) Have the knowledge of and to inform their customers of all treatments, natural origin and all areas necessary for legal compliance and to allow the purchaser to make informed choices;
- 2) Operate in full compliance with all laws, local, state and federal, and to comply with Federal Trade Commission and other applicable industry guidelines and standards;
- 3) Operate in full compliance with the laws of the countries from which we import and distribute, including those laws relating to labor and environmental protection;
- 4) Shall not support nor participate in any activities that are illegal or in support of terrorism, smuggling or theft.

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The AGTA's efforts have, since its beginning, extended beyond the supply chain to acknowledge its role in the global gemstone community and to strive to improve conditions within it. In 1998, when flooding in the mines took the lives of over 100 miners in Tanzania, AGTA spearheaded an international relief effort, sending supplies, training personnel, and building a permanent shelter equipped with search and rescue equipment.

In February of 2002, in response to the disastrous results of a press report alleging links between al Qaeda and tanzanite, the AGTA convened an international summit at the AGTA GemFair Tucson which resulted in the Tucson Protocols for Tanzanite, a Kimberly Process-like system of export regimens and a dealer warrantee system designed to ensure a clean, verifiable transaction process throughout the global chain involved in tanzanite.

In 2002 AGTA and its laboratory issued the first Laboratory alert regarding beryllium treated sapphires originating in Thailand and continued to lead industry efforts to conduct research and to educate the industry about this new treatment. In February of 2003, at the AGTA GemFair Tucson, the AGTA convened a summit conference to address significant concerns over the disclosure of this material. The meeting, attended by representatives of the US jewelry industry and representatives of the Thai gemstone manufacturer's community. What resulted was a joint statement from the AGTA, the American Gem Society, the Jewelers of America, and the Jewelers Vigilance Committee and agreed to by the Thai gemstone community to require full and accurate disclosure of this new beryllium treatment in sapphire. As a result of the effort, millions of dollars in fraudulent sales and purchases of this material were averted.

The American Gem Trade Association is proud to continue its leadership role in the promulgation of business practices that educate our members and the trade at large, to ensure that the integrity of our products are beyond reproach, and to give back to our global community. These endeavors are codified in the *AGTA Code of Ethics and Fair Business Practices*, a living document that continues to evolve to address the ever-shifting landscape of the jewelry industry. We are proud to present the newest edition of this document, which can be found at <http://www.agta.org/about/ethics.html>.

Respectfully,

The Board of Directors

American Gem Trade Association

For further information regarding the AGTA, please call (800) 972-1162 or visit the AGTA website at [www.agta.org](http://www.agta.org).

*The American Gem Trade Association is a not-for-profit Association serving the natural colored gemstone and cultured pearl industry since 1981. Headquartered in Dallas, Texas, The AGTA serves the industry as "The Authority in Color."*

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