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Ethics Essay

A code of ethics is necessary for any individual or organization. Whether they are written or not, ethical standards must be made and enforced. Without a code of ethics, people will often choose the easiest choice instead of the right choice. This is especially true for engineers. Engineers are often the last ones to ensure a product is safe before it is released to the public. They also are responsible for bringing ideas to reality. Engineers need to be able to make an ethical decision in hard situations.

When put in an ethical situation, I attempt to think outside of myself. I try to think of what is the right decision. My rule-of-thumb is usually to imagine if everyone made the same decision as me; if my choice was made thousands of times, how would the results be? Although this sounds like it would yield obvious answers, I often find myself making unpopular decisions. However, I believe this rule leads to the best outcomes in the long-term.

During class discussions, I discussed the Volkswagen issue. Volkswagen used software to cheat emissions tests. The software allowed cars to be sold that polluted more than the allowed amount. After the scandal, Volkswagen blamed the entire scandal on a department head.

The discussions in my class were enlightening. I learned a lot, and I considered perspectives on ethical issues I hadn't thought about before. For instance, a classmate brought up that VW was the only company that cheated in my case study. I hadn't considered this, and it puts a lot more burden on VW than I had originally thought. My opinions were also reaffirmed

by my classmates. We had similar ideas on my case study and others. Specifically, I had very similar opinions to my classmate that discussed the Pinto Problem. We both found the industry standards at the time to be inadequate. Although different perspectives were offered, the code of ethics made it a lot easier to discuss and agree.

The “Virtue of Ethics” directly relates to this case study. The first virtue I thought of was Pressure. It is unlikely that the employee just felt like cheating an emissions test. Most people will realize that this was either an instruction or the only way to meet a deadline. Instead of blaming the engineer or the manager, I think blame should fall on those that set unattainable standards. Another virtue I considered was Responsibility. The engineers and everyone involved that had knowledge of the emissions fraud failed to be responsible. They should have stood up for what is right instead of ignoring their responsibility. Lastly, I think Honesty is an important virtue in this situation. The honesty of those in high positions is lacking. Instead of taking blame as a company, they lied and blamed one department.