

Ethics Assignment #5: Firesheep Extension for Firefox

Due: Thursday, 10.13.22, by 1:00 pm

Background

The lecture on Thursday will cover the seven-step strategy for evaluating arguments which you will use in Ethics Assignment #6. AECL's Therac-25 case will be used as an example. We'll also start coverage of professional codes of ethics.

Learning Goals

By the end of the lecture, you will:

- be able to apply the seven-step strategy for evaluating arguments
- know the basic tenets of the IEEE Code of Ethics and the ACM Code of Ethics

Assignment

Case scenario:

In 2010, Eric Butler released an extension of the Firefox browser called Firesheep. A Firesheep user can connect to an open wireless network, click on the "Start Capturing" button, and then identify anyone on that same wireless network who visits an insecure website. Once a user of an insecure web site is identified, a Firesheep user is able to log in as that user and do the same things as the user is able to do. Firesheep was released as free and open-source software. When he released it, Butler wrote that "websites have a responsibility to protect the people who depend on their services. They've been ignoring this responsibility for too long, and it's time for everyone to demand a more secure web. My hope is that Firesheep will help the users win." Firesheep was downloaded 500,000 times during the first week it was available. Three months after Butler released Firesheep, Facebook added the option to connect to Facebook through an encrypted (HTTPS) connection. Shortly thereafter, Twitter also provided this option.

Was Eric Butler's release of Firesheep ethically acceptable? Use rule utilitarianism to analyze the situation thoroughly, and then develop an inductive argument in standard form (premises and conclusion) that utilizes your analysis to support your conclusion, i.e., use rule utilitarianism in your argument. Make your argument as strong as possible.

Submit a pdf of your work via Canvas by 1:00 pm on Thursday, 10.13.22.
