The Amoral Engineers of Takata Corporation

Takata Corporation is a Japanese company widely known in the auto industry for their production of automotive parts. However, they are more infamously known for executing the largest safety recall in U.S. history. The topic of this recall being their defective airbags that have been reported to explode and send metal shrapnel into the cabin of the car thus causing serious injury, or death, to the car’s passengers. Since the initial recall in 2008 that forced Honda to recall nearly 4,000 cars [1], Takata has influenced recalls from 17 different automotive companies including Ferrari, Toyota, and Tesla, making Takata associated with approximately 63 million recalled airbags and counting [2]. Takata Corp has filed for bankruptcy and its leadership has been denounced in the eye of the public. Many journalists solely blame on the engineers who directly saw the risk of the faulty airbags, but the scandal was merely fueled by both parties. In depositions, former Takata engineers have revealed that select reports presented to automotive companies were misrepresented; it was reported that some test results were removed to reduce the airbags performance inconsistencies. During a February 2016 deposition, Kevin Fitzgerald, an engineer who left Takata two years prior, stated that he witnessed and reported data manipulation by a coworker named Shinichi Tanaka. After telling Fitzgerald that remedial action would occur, Takata’s management and lawyers promoted Tanaka to a position where Fitzgerald was his subordinate [3]. It is testimonies like Fitzgerald’s that lead the public to question the ethical codes at which Takata Corporation holds themselves to. There are a range of governing engineering standards and principles between countries, as well as individual companies within those countries. Although the standards are variant, many have the predominantly common ethic conducts of prioritizing the health, safety, and welfare of the public, and for members to stay objective and honest when practicing [4]. Understandably, these codes emanate a distinct sense of the reputation and integrity of the employee’s, and companies overall. By going against these general ideals, Takata staff have lost their credibility while causing harm and trauma to many consumers. At the heart of this scandal lies the engineers who chose to obscure the test results despite being extremely familiar with the airbag’s irregularities. **Takata’s engineering management should have delayed the production of defective airbags because of the known risks that arose from product development, flawed testing experiences, and analytically foreseeing the harm that consumers would endure.**

**When engineers are assigned a project, there is a methodology that they must adhere to.** Although every country has different engineering standards, many companies look to the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). The IEC develops and launches standards for various industries dealing in electrical and electronic technologies [5].

**The development process is typically followed by a prototype testing period. In this period, Takata engineers blatantly disregarded the safety concerns that were witnessed.**

**Being considered experts in their field, it is implied that the engineers at Takata knew the substantial implications of the distribution of millions of defective safety devices.**

References

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