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CET498

Ethics

What are Ethics? The principles of conduct governing an individual or a group. For the Individual principles can be found from various sources, mainly the family, their religion and culture, or experiences they’ve had. When it comes to groups such as employees or students, the principles of conduct are usually defined by that education institution or code of conduct in the workplace.

Recently, Volkswagen has been caught for evading emissions standards in the US. Effecting up to 11 million VW diesel vehicles worldwide that were producing emissions levels 40 times higher than allowed by the US Clean Air Act.

Volkswagen was able to do this by implementing additional conditions into an Auxiliary Emission Control Device that would adjust the engine performance and emission output to meet the current conditions, whether that be outside (not being tested) or inside(being tested).This AECD tested conditions such as the steering wheel angle, vehicle speed and barometric pressure for values that would be present when the vehicle is being tested. When the conditions were met, the AECD was instructed to downgrade the engine performance to meet EPA standards.

The actions taken by Volkswagen definitely violate both personal and group principles. Not only does every church and household teach honesty and not to cheat which is exactly what Volkswagen did, they cheated the system. Legal action can definitely be taken by both the EPA and even other organizations such as WWF and The Sierra Club that are environmental activists. Not only is Volkswagen hurting the environment by violating the EPA codes put in, but the activist groups are fighting to enforce even stricter environmental principles.

According to the National Society of Professional Engineers – Code of Conduct, “Engineers, in the fulfillment of their professional duties, shall:

1. Hold paramount the safety, health, and welfare of the public.
2. Perform services only in areas of their competence.
3. Issue public statements only in an objective and truthful manner.
4. Act for each employer or client as faithful agents or trustees.
5. Avoid deceptive acts.
6. Conduct themselves honorably, responsibly, ethically, and lawfully so as to enhance the honor, reputation, and usefulness of the profession.”

Based on the Fundamental Canons listed above, Volkswagen violated numbers 1, 3, 5 and 6 by implementing the additional conditions into the AECD. They did not put the safety and health of the public first. Nobody knew about this, no public statements were issued in a truthful manner. They were extremely deceptive by avoiding the EPA’s engine emission restrictions on engine performance. And lastly they did not conduct themselves in a way to enhance the honor, reputation and usefulness of the profession.

Sources:

-<http://www.nspe.org/resources/ethics/code-ethics>

-Engineers, Ethics, and the VW Scandal, Prachi Patel, IEEE Spectrum, September 25, 2015

-IEEECodeofConduct,June2014

-Developing Personal Ethics: How Individual Morality Is Created, Christine Scivicque, Oct 23, 2007