

### Ethical Case Analysis

Bryan works as a forklift operator in the summer. One day, his supervisor, Max, tells him to pour out half a drum of toxic coolant down the drain claiming the toxins are at the bottom so it is okay. Bryan voices his disapproval of this but is chastised by Max.

In this situation Max, even though he claims the pouring of the coolant is harmless, and Bryan, if he pours the coolant down the drain, are in the wrong morally. If the drum is poured down the drain, a member of the moral community will eventually be affected in some adverse way. Max and Bryan, both moral agents, will be causing harm to others. It is their responsibility, as individuals who handle hazardous waste, to properly dispose of that waste to not harm others. Also, while harm was not intended by pouring the coolant down the drain, it was to be predicted that harm to others could come from it. Even though Max calls Bryan an “environmentalist” and that he isn’t living in the real world for not wanting to pour the coolant out, someone in Max’s position must have been educated about the dangers of pouring toxins down the drain.

The only harm that would be avoided in this case is the harm to the company in terms of decreased production due to the added time it would take to make sure they are in adherence with every regulation there is. This however is not justifiable since the company is causing much more harm to other innocent people to save themselves a small amount of trouble. The people who would be harmed by this wish not to be contaminated by these toxins and are even unsuspecting of it. Max has no relationship with the people that would be affected by the dumping of the coolant, so he certainly does not have the ability to violate their moral rules without their consent. Also, the moral rules Max and Bryan would be breaking by dumping the toxins is not done in a manner to either prevent or punish the breaking of moral rules by the people who are affected by this dumping of toxins. Putting all these reasons together, the only alternative action that would prevent innocent people from being harmed is not dumping the coolant down the drain.

As mentioned before, the only way that Bryan would be able to avoid violating any moral rules is to go against Max and not dump the coolant and make sure to properly dispose the drums based on hazardous waste disposal guidelines. This could cause Max to become angry with Bryan and possibly fire him which is not acceptable since Bryan uses the money from this job to pay for college. However, if Max does try to fire him Bryan can claim that he is wrongfully being fired since all he did was adhere to regulations and laws when he was ordered to ignore them. All Bryan has to do is explain to someone higher up the managerial ladder the position he was put in and they would be forced to let Bryan keep his job to prevent the bad attention the company would get for firing a person for adhering to the law. However, if Bryan is unable to deal with the negative feedback he would get from fellow workers by doing that, Bryan can try pouring the coolant into any empty unused vesicle temporarily. After he does this Max will think that he has done his job and that is when he can go and tell a superior manager the situation and how he was told to break laws and that is unacceptable. From there the superior manager would

again be put in a position where he must reprimand Max it would not be nearly as bad as in the other situation. This would also mean that Bryan would receive much less if any negative attention from other workers and this situation would not happen again.