**Professional Ethics (HSS F343) Submitted by:**

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**Occupational Health and Safety**

Professional workers have a right to be protected against workplace dangers because it is not possible to say that workplace will be a risk free workplace, it will always be carrying some risk that can cause illness, injury, and even death. Some accidents and exposures are unavoidable and if at all we want to prevent accidents and exposures we have to put certain cost for it and there is limit for everything for making sure that the workplace is healthy and safe. Safety always comes at a price and the costs of complying with safety standards or exposure limits must be weighed against their benefit.

***Distinction between Health and Safety:***

It is useful to make a distinction between *safety* and *health* because these two are not mixed up when we talk about workers in the work place because these two are different concerns.

***Health:***

Health dangers are factors in the workplace that cause illnesses and other conditions that develop over a lifetime of exposure. Many diseases associated with specific occupations have long been known. In many workplaces we see hearing loss from constant noise or nerve damage from repetitive motions. Some of the leading causes of death, such as heart disease, cancer, and respiratory conditions, are thought to be job related, although causal connections are often difficult to make. Stress on the job is now being recognized as a workplace danger. It can have an impact on our overall health. Common effects of stress on the body include headache muscle tension or pain, chest pains, increased heart rate and blood pressure, weakened immune system, high blood sugar etc.

***Safety:***

When we talk about Safety dangers it generally involves broken bones, burns, loss of limbs, electrical shocks, cuts , sprains, and impairment of sight or seeing. We generally see that these types of injuries are the result of sudden and often violent events which involve industrial equipment or the physical environment of the workplace. For examples coming into contact with moving parts of machinery or electrical lines, chemical spills or getting hit by falling objects, fires, and falls from great heights etc.

***Health and Safety Issues:***

***Regulation of Occupational Health and Safety:***

It is coming from different sources; it can come from state, state agencies, employers or employees. But as far as the government part is concern we see that it focuses on safety issues and hardly on health issues because that is taking a lot of time to develop and something it is difficult to identify causal connection because different reason are offers. For example permissible exposure limits for toxic substances and specifications for equipment and facilities.

***Right to a Safe and Healthy Workplace:***

The right of employees to a safe and healthy workplace might seem to be very obvious. In most workplace accidents, employers can defend themselves against the charge of violating the rights of workers with two arguments.

***1. The Concept of a Direct Cause:***

Two factors enable employers to deny that their actions are a direct cause of an accident in the workplace.

1. Lack of care on the part of employee.

2. The negligence of co-workers. Sometimes it is not practical to reduce the probability of harm any further.

***2. Voluntary Assumption of Risk and Coercion***:

The employees voluntarily assume the risk inherent in work. The argument that employees assume the risk of work can be challenged on several grounds, first employees have adequate information at the time they make a choice, and second, employees’ choices must be truly free. “Do this or be fired (otherwise stay unemployed)!.

***Right to refuse Unsafe Work and Know about***:

The right to refuse dangerous work is different from a right to a safe and healthy workplace. A right to refuse hazardous work, however, is only one of several alternatives that workers have for securing the right to a safe and healthy workplace.

The right to know is actually an aggregation of several rights.

* The duty to reveal information already possessed;
* The duty to communicate information about danger through labeling, written communication, and training programs;
* The duty to seek out existing information from the scientific literature and other sources;
* The duty to produce new information relevant to employee health.

***Moral Justifications of a Right to Know:***

***The Argument from Autonomy:***

The most common argument for the right to know is one based on autonomy. This argument begins with the premise that autonomous individuals are those who are able to exercise free choice in matters that affect their welfare most deeply. It is necessary that there should be Balance between autonomy of workers and cost to employers. And the other argument is employees should not be treated as means, they should be treated as ends.

***The Utilitarian Argument:***

There are two arguments for the right to know as a means to greater worker health and safety.

1. The workers who are aware of danger in the workplace will be in a much more comfortable situation as far well being and happiness is concern.

2. Workers bargain over risk information for less pay that is a trade-off between risk and wages. If we have risk information and getting wages then we can protect our self that will lead to happiness.

***Conclusion:***

The workers have a right to a safe and healthy workplace and employers also have a moral responsibility and, in many cases, a legal obligation to secure his right. The level of health and safety usually involves trade-offs with other goods, including higher wages for employees and greater profits for employers. The right to a healthy and safe workplace cannot be justified merely by appealing to a right not to be injured or killed. It must be understood in the broad sense of overall wellbeing of people in the workplace.