

## **Brake Scandal Case Discussion Questions**

### **1. What ethical issues surfaced in this case? Who were the people involved?**

Four ethical issues arose in the case. The first is the falsification of data and fabrication of test results; the second is unethical directives given by superiors; the third is the complicity and silence among individuals who did not speak out against the fraudulent activity; and the fourth is the endangerment of public safety. People involved in the case were: Ralph Gretzinger, the test lab supervisor; Lawson, an engineer; Sink, a person who instructs Lawson to miscalibrate the instrument, implicating their involvement in the unethical practices; Russell Line, the manager of the Goodrich Technical Services Section; Bud Sunderman, the chief engineer, and Warren, another engineer mentioned in the case.

### **2. Is it morally right or morally wrong for a person in Mr. Vandivier's situation to write up a false report? On what moral standards is your answer based?**

In Mr. Vandivier's situation, it is morally wrong to write a false report. To begin writing up a false report involves intentionally misrepresenting data and deceiving others. Falsifying a report violates these values and undermines the trust that stakeholders place in the accuracy and reliability of the information provided. Secondly, professionals, such as engineers, have a responsibility to uphold ethical standards in their work, which include maintaining integrity and adhering to professional codes of conduct, emphasizing honesty, objectivity, and the well-being and safety of the public. My moral standards are based on a utilitarian perspective, which evaluates actions based on their consequences and overall happiness or well-being produced, and fabricating data can lead to serious consequences, such as endangering public safety if faulty products are certified. The potential harm and negative impact on individuals and society outweigh any short-term benefits that may be gained by writing the false report.

### **3. At which of Kohlberg's levels would you place Mr. Vandivier? Mr. Lawson? Mr. Warren? Mr. Sink? Mr. Line?**

I would place Mr. Vandivier at the pre-conventional level, stage two because he is making decisions based on self-interest, seeking personal benefit, and avoiding punishment. I would also place Mr. Lawson at the pre-conventional level, stage two because he is also driven by self-interest and wants to avoid negative consequences. I would place Mr. Warren at the conventional level, stage four because his objection suggests that he values adherence to ethical principles and the importance of truthfulness. I would also place Mr. Sink at the conventional level, stage four because he recognizes the importance of following established rules and maintaining order within the organization. And I would put Mr. Line in the pre-conventional, stage two because he prioritizes compliance with orders over ethical consideration.

**4. In your opinion, who would be morally responsible for any “accidents” that resulted when pilots tested the A7D planes (and their brakes)? Explain your response by assigning degrees of responsibility to the person/people responsible.**

If Mr. Vandivier were to write a false report, knowing that the brakes were faulty and that pilots would be conducting tests on the A7D planes, he would bear a high degree of moral responsibility. He would be deliberately misleading others and putting their safety at risk. And his actions could lead to accidents and harm to pilots and potentially innocent individuals. Similar to Mr. Vandivier, if Mr. Lawson actively collaborated with Mr. Vandivier in the falsification of the report, knowing the potential risks associated with the faulty brakes, he would also bear a high degree of moral responsibility, as he would knowingly participate in the deception. Mr. Warren's degree of moral responsibility would be relatively low because he objected to the falsification of the report and expressed concerns about the potential risks. Mr. Sink's moral responsibility would be relatively low as well, given that he confronted Mr. Vandivier about the false report and expressed concerns regarding potential harm.