

# ford pinto essay sample

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The case over here is that of Pinto a car launched by Ford motor company. The Ford Pinto is a subcompact car produced by the Ford Motor Company for the model years 1971–1980. The car’s name derives from the Pinto horse. Initially offered as a two-door sedan, Ford offered “ Runabout” hatchback and wagon models the following year, competing in the U. S market with the AMC Gremlin and Chevrolet Vega, as well as imported cars from Volkswagen, Datsun , and Toyota. By January 1971, the Pinto had sold over 100, 000 units. In its last model year, Ford built 68, 179 units. Overall, during its 10 year production run there were over 2 million Pintos sold.

The controversy surrounding the Ford Pinto concerned the placement of the automobile’s fuel tank. It was located behind the rear axle, instead of above it. This was initially done in an effort to create more trunk space. The problem with this design, which later became evident, was that it made the Pinto more vulnerable to a rear-end collision. This vulnerability was enhanced by other features of the car. The gas tank and the rear axle were separated by only nine inches. There were also bolts that were positioned in a manner that threatened the gas tank. Finally, the fuel filler pipe design resulted in a higher probability that it would to disconnect from the tank in the event of an accident than usual, causing gas spillage that could lead to dangerous fires. Because of these numerous design faults, the Pinto became the center of public debate.

The case is to understand whose fault lead to all of these problems. The automobile’s fuel tank was located behind the rear axle, instead of above it. The gas tank and the rear axle were separated by only nine inches. There were also bolts that were positioned in a manner that threatened the gas

tank. Finally, the fuel filler pipe design resulted in a higher probability that it would to disconnect from the tank in the event of an accident than usual, causing gas spillage that could lead to dangerous fires. These were due to many reasons. The product objectives forwarded by the company was, 1.

True subcompact: Size & Weight

2. Low cost of ownership: Initial price, Fuel consumption, Reliability, Serviceability

3. ClearProductSuperiority: Appearance, Comfort, Features, Ride and Handling, Performance Due to these reasons the engineers were forced to do some adjustments. So the company itself can be considered as a problem. The engineer's act can also be considered as a problem. They should work ethically even though the company asked them to do such things; they are the one who should take care of the responsibility of the safety of the people. Actually the main problem that leads all of them to such a situation is their greed for money or profit. Politics can't do anything with this issue. Political leaders can only take action against the company or conduct protests against such acts. Economy has the main role in this issue. It is an economically efficient method which has been accepted by courts for numerous years, however, juries may not always agree, so companies should take this into account. It is to maintain the economical background of the company that the company did such an act.

The sociological aspect makes clear that man is a social animal. The engineers and the company knew that such an action would surely create problems like huge accidents and it would affect the life of the people. They

should have given value for human life. We can just go through the various incidents that occurred. On August 10, 1978, three teenage girls stopped to refuel the 1973 Ford Pinto sedan they were driving. After filling up, the driver loosely reapplied the gas cap which subsequently fell off as they headed down U. S. Highway 33. Trying to retrieve the cap, the girls stopped in the right lane of the highway shoulder since there was no space on the highway for cars to safely pull off the roadway. Shortly thereafter, a van weighing over 400 pounds and modified with a rigid plank for a front bumper was traveling at fifty five miles an hour and stuck the stopped Pinto. The two passengers died at the scene when the car burst into flames.

The driver was ejected and died shortly thereafter in the hospital. Inspecting the van shortly after the accident, the police found open beer bottles, marijuana and caffeine pills inside. It was the attempt of the company to bring technological improvement that lead to such a situation. The car design had a lot of problems. The automobile's fuel tank was located behind the rear axle, instead of above it. The gas tank and the rear axle were separated by only nine inches. There were also bolts that were positioned in a manner that threatened the gas tank. Finally, the fuel filler pipe design resulted in a higher probability that it would to disconnect from the tank in the event of an accident than usual, causing gas spillage that could lead to dangerous fires. This was the technological drawback of the car. The ecology is also affected due to the numerous accidents that occurred.

The explosions would surely have affected nature. Ford was not in violation of the law in any way and had to make the decision whether to incur a cost to fix the obvious problem internally. There were several options for fuel

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system redesign. The option most seriously considered would have cost the Ford Motor Company and additional \$11 per vehicle. Under the strict \$2000 budget restriction, even this nominal cost seemed large. In addition, Ford had earlier based an advertising campaign on safety which failed miserably. Therefore, there was a corporate belief, attributed to Lee Iacocca himself, of " safety doesn't sell."

We cannot find any particular person who caused this trouble. We can just analyze the character of the company. Although Ford had access to a new design which would decrease the possibility of the Ford Pinto from exploding, the company chose not to implement the design, which would have cost \$11 per car, even though it had done an analysis showing that the new design would result in 180 less deaths. The company defended itself on the grounds that it used the accepted risk/benefit analysis to determine if the monetary costs of making the change were greater than the societal benefit. Based on the numbers Ford used, the cost would have been \$137 million versus the \$49.5 million price tag put on the deaths, injuries, and car damages, and thus Ford felt justified not implementing the design change.

This risk/benefit analysis was created out of the development of product liability, culminating at Judge Learned Hand's BPL formula, where if the expected harm exceeded the cost to take the precaution, then the company must take the precaution, whereas if the cost was liable, then it did not have to. However, the BPL formula focuses on a specific accident, while the risk/benefit analysis requires an examination of the costs, risks, and benefits through use of the product as a whole. Based on this analysis, Ford legally chose not to make the design changes which would have made the Pinto

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safer. However, just because it was legal doesn't necessarily mean that it was ethical. It is difficult to understand how a price can be put on saving a human life.

We can't blame the company alone. During the analysis of the design of the pinto car a Ford engineer stated: " But you miss the point entirely. You see, safety isn't the issue, trunk space is. You have no idea how stiff the competition is over trunk space. Do you realize that if we put a Capri-type tank in the Pinto you could only get one set of golf clubs in the trunk?" This shows how ethical an engineer is and also the character of the engineer. 1. The first question that arose during the designing was to replace the fuel tank with the one used in Ford Capri. It would have been located over the rear axle and differential housing, with much better protection from rear-ends impacts. But the option was disregarded due to the impact on trunk space.

2. The second question that arose was three alternative solutions analyzed pre and post production i. A plastic insulator fitted on the differential that would keep the bolts from ever making contact with the fuel tank. Cost of this item was less than \$1. ii. The use of a rubber bladder/liner produced by the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company, at a unit cost of \$5. 08 per car. iii. An extra steel plate attached to the rear of the car just behind the bumper, at a unit cost of up to \$11 per car to install. But all of these were disregarded due to the impact on costs.

3. Is the company right or wrong?

According to the company's objective of earning profit the company was

right. But the company should think ethically and give value for human life. The company's deed never can be considered right. The first alternative that is considered is that the company's action is not at all ethical and it is wrong. Secondly the engineers could be more ethical and they could have given more importance to the safety of people rather than making profit for the company. The common people should never go behind all of these new experiments of all these companies. They should think technically about the vehicle before they buy it. The best and the only alternative is that the company is wrong. In my opinion the Ford Motor Company not only acted unethically, but their actions can easily be considered criminal.

The decision to release the Ford Pinto, and not disclosing the safety issues related to this car, resulted in the death and bodily harm of hundreds of people. Ford knew that the car had serious safety issues if involved in a rear end collision. They discovered this in their own secret car crash experiments conducted by their own engineers. The company went as far as lying to federal investigators about even conducting these tests. Decisions were made that only took into consideration the bottom line of the project, and company. The company waited eight years to correct the design defect that was directly implicated in the deaths of hundreds of its consumers. This in itself was an extremely unethical move by the company management team. They reasoned that these tragic results were acceptable by the same federal safety mandates that the company lobbyist's fought for.

Ford Motor Company knew that the federal government was making moves to introduce stricter safety standards for manufacturing automobiles. Under the leadership of Henry Ford II, the company's lobbyist group went to work to <https://assignbuster.com/ford-pinto-essay-sample/>

delay the process, and guide the regulators the way the company saw fit. It was the Ford team that recommended, negotiated, and agreed to make safety related decisions on the basis of a cost-benefit analysis. This analysis conducted by Ford determined that the \$11 fix to correct the gas tank problem would not benefit the programs profits. Not doing anything in the long-term would have cost the company less. Apparently at that time Ford felt that the life of a human being was only worth \$200, 725. 00. So why were Ford's actions unethical? Well I firmly believe that W. D. Ross was correct. He implied that a manufacturer of a good that will be purchased by a consumer have a form of intertwined relation. All the companies should strictly follow ethics as their basic principle and work according to it. Professional ethics is greatly relevant in this new corporative world.