

# An explosive problem at gigantic motors

[Government](#), [Army](#)



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### The Case

This case is about an employee's responsibility to know what cannot be compromised in aspects of work despite personal obligations. In the case Jonathan Archer who works in Gigantic Motors, a manufacturer of light trucks, was advised of a situation where previous product design can cause the death of eight customers in the future. Archer came to this information under the guarantee that it is in confidence. If Archer reveals his knowledge of this information, his source Zefrem Cochrane, can lose his job. Cochrane is an engineer in the design department who is also a new home owner and soon to be father. On the other, if Archer remains complacent in the interest of preserving his friend's job security, he gravely endangers eight human lives.

### The Moral Problem

In this case, Archer is placed in a situation where he either endangers the job security of a friend to whom he has promised confidentiality or where he places the lives of customers in grave danger. In a wider business perspective, this case illustrates a situation in knowledge management within a company. This illustrates whether an employee has the moral obligation to disclose confidential information to warn against potential dangers to the public or should remain silent in an effort to preserve job security and corporate profitability.

### Moral Analysis

In knowledge management employees and management interpret data, similar to the statistics uncover by Cochrane indicating the unsafe product design could cause death, and control and translate it in a manner that would improve business performance (Bellinger, 2004). In the case of higher management in Gigantic Motors, when Cochrane brought this information to them, they decided to suppress it in an effort to preserve company reputation and profitability. For Archer the ethical dilemmas lie in whether corporate profitability and a colleague's job security should precede safety of customers. In my assessment, Archer should again bring the safety concerns to the attention of management as well as disseminate information among current owners of the unsafe trucks. The George S. May International Company (GMIC) defines six ethics guidelines to business. Among these six guidelines is a need for business people to “know what can not be compromised” in the conduct of business (George S. May International Company, n. d.). In business there are some aspects that are discretionary and there are aspects that should not be compromised. In an evaluation of aspects that are discretionary one should know that these are the aspects where there is room to maneuver, bargain or compromise, safety and security is not among these aspects. GMIC further explains that there are universal norms that should always take precedence in ethical evaluations. In these universal norms the protection of public and employee safety is of top billing. More specifically, when weighing consequences Archer needs to compare the primacy of job security versus the prevention of eight deaths. Clearly, the preservation of lives should be prioritized over economic stability for his friend and the company. Archer, although a third party to knowledge

management, is tasked with the responsibility of reporting the unsafe product design, albeit reputation and financial setbacks may result from the fall out. GMIC, in its six guidelines to ethics, also discusses that the responsibility to act ethically is upon all employees and members of the organization. While Cochrane was already complacent about the serious product flaw because he had alerted management and was dissuaded to take further action, Archer should not reflect the same complacency. When human lives are at risk, and can be protected, lives should take precedence over financial remuneration.

#### Reference List

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George S. May International Company. (n. d.). Business Ethics Guidelines and Resources: Ethics Articles. George S. May International Group website. Retrieved March 23, 2009 from [http://ethics.georgesmay.com/no\\_compromise.htm](http://ethics.georgesmay.com/no_compromise.htm)