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April 4, 2015

EE 394

Ethics

On Wednesday April 1st my group meet with professor Ajjarapu and discussed engineering ethics. We all read and then discussed the article *Case Study-Space Shuttle Columbia.* The article was an explanation of why the Columbia spaceship burned up upon reentry. The main focus was on the engineers who allowed the space ship to fly with 1600 "safety waivers" or small problems they knew could cause catastrophic errors. We discussed how there are fine lines between accidents and previously known problems that are overlooked or suppressed. We discussed the importance of speaking out when we find something wrong with a design that could cause human deaths. We decided that the importance of having ethical engineers is to keep people safe and not to overlook small problems in the interest of saving money.

Three of the "Virtues of Ethics" that apply to the *Case Study-Space Shuttle Columbia* are, integrity, honesty, and responsibility. The integrity of the NASA engineers was compromised when they signed off on problem they knew could cause major problems. The engineers were not honest enough with themselves of real life problems that could arise from the problems they knew about. Finally, they did not take responsibility to fix the problems or deem the spacecraft incapable of flight. The other "Virtues of Ethics" do not apply as directly to the article but are all good things for engineers to remember when they create something.

I personally feel that ethical decisions are important being an engineer. When I make something that other people in the world use and are effected by it is my responsibility to make it as safe as possible. Cost should be an important factor in my decisions but it should cause me to intentionally make a faulty product. I am responsible to give my honesty opinion based on my knowledge and not change it just to meet business demands.