



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Accountability

Author(s)

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Description

Who is accountable and at what costs in the Morton Thiokol Space Shuttle Challenger Disaster.

Body

I have filed a billion dollar law suit against MTI and a ten million dollar law suit against NASA plus a false claims suit against MTI on behalf of the U. S. Government. First, it is my intention to secure compensatory damages for my lost salary and ruined career and second, I hope the suits send a serious and significant message to MTI in particular and to executives of other companies and government agencies that they cannot make arbitrary irresponsible decisions that kill people and ruin the lives and careers of their employees without accountability. In my opinion, there has been zero accountability to date.

Everyone involved with the decision to launch *Challenger* at MTI and MSFC has been either transferred or taken normal or early retirement without any penalty for his actions. Further, MTI has not paid the \$10 million penalty in their contract for their hardware being responsible for the disaster and loss of seven lives and the destruction of over \$2 billion in hardware. An agreement between MTI and NASA has been reported in the media that MTI will take \$10 million less in profits when the production contract resumes. I would like to raise several very basic questions about these conditions. First, who receives the interest/investment benefit (millions

of dollars) by not paying the contract penalty? Second, why did the cost of the boosters increase above the original contract price when it was common internal company knowledge that MTI was in the process of negotiating a lower price prior to the *Challenger* disaster to protect their single-source contract status? Also, why are NASA and MTI always making the point in the media that MTI is receiving no profit for the redesign when we all know that they will make it up when production resumes? Now, my colleagues, that is what I mean by zero accountability.

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Notes

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Case Study / Scenario

Topics

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Workplace Ethics

Safety

Catastrophes, Hazards, Disasters

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Discipline(s)

Aerospace Engineering

Mechanical Engineering

Engineering