

EE101 Homework Assignment

Presentation by Roger Boisjoly on Engineering Ethics

Mr. Roger Boisjoly was a mechanical engineer working for Morton Thiokol in the 1980s. Morton Thiokol is the manufacturer of the solid rocket booster components of the space shuttle. In January, 1986, Mr. Boisjoly worked directly with NASA managers prior to the launch decision for space shuttle Challenger. He vigorously opposed the decision to launch the Challenger based on his well-founded concerns about the expected low overnight temperatures (18 F) at the launch pad, but was overridden by senior managers from both Morton Thiokol and NASA. The disastrous consequences of the managers' decision became apparent with the explosion of the launch vehicle 90 seconds after liftoff on January 28, 1986.

Mr. Boisjoly consequently testified in defense of the no-launch decision after the disaster took place. He is viewed as one of the main "whistleblowers" regarding the unsafe chain of decisions at NASA, and he has appeared on all major TV networks, the MacNeil/Lehrer News Hour, and has testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology. He now offers lectures and workshops on upholding integrity and ethics in the workplace, and will be giving such a presentation at MSU.

Some background information is available at:

<http://onlineethics.org/moral/boisjoly/RB-intro.html>

Mr. Boisjoly will be giving two lectures on **Wednesday, April 2nd**:

2-4PM (Roberts 101)

Open to all students. This presentation will give a short Challenger overview followed by professionalism issues and advice.

7-9PM (EPS 103)

Open to the public. This presentation is Mr. Boisjoly's primary Challenger discussion which is catered toward a more general audience. He will discuss the details behind the Challenger disaster and what happened "behind the scenes."

Your assignment for EE 101:

- Attend either (or both) of the lecture presentation by Mr. Roger Boisjoly on Wednesday, April 2, 2003.
- Write a one page (minimum) summary of *your reaction* to what Mr. Boisjoly has to say.
- Your paper should be written carefully using a word processor, spell checked, and reviewed for proper grammar and punctuation.
- The papers are due at the start of lab next week (April 8 for Section 1 and April 9 for Section 2).