



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Late To Work

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## Description

An engineer's work suffers due to a family obligation. What should her employer do?

## Body

Marta Malasobras is unreliable. She has arrived late to work almost everyday. Her co-workers are quite angry about this and discuss their frustrations with the supervisor. They claim that she is affecting the work environment; because she is not doing her share and everyone else in the work team is overloaded.

This particular process relies on work in teams. It requires four operators to operate as one, coordinated production unit. If one team member is absent, the rest of the team works less efficiently. Company policy mandates that hourly employees must begin everyday at 6:00 a.m.

The supervisor talked with the employee and asked her why she was late so many times. She burst into tears. She had to drive her six-year old boy to school every morning. The school gates did not open until 6:30; she had to wait for them to open before she could drop off her son. This particular morning, bowing to the pressure she felt from her work team, she dropped her boy off before the gates opened. She had worried about him the entire morning. She knew that she had to get to work on

time. She understood the effect that her habitual lateness was having on her group's effectiveness. Yet there was no one she could find to take her boy to school in the morning.

## **Questions:**

1. What should the supervisor do?
2. What are the alternatives of action?
3. Which meet the tests of feasibility and ethics?

## **Notes**

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