



Online Ethics Center  
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

# Temperature Forecast for Challenger Flight

## Author(s)

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## Description

Part Five of Seven Discussions Concerning the Challenger Disaster.

## Body

Accordingly, I wrote a series of very damning activity reports in which I left no room for error about how I felt concerning the lack of management support. Unfortunately, I never received any comments back and never knew if they had been incorporated into reports up through the management structure.

The evening meeting of January 27, 1986, was the concluding event preceding the launch disaster. The major activity that day focused upon the predicted 18 degrees Fahrenheit overnight temperature.

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## Discussion Question

Contrary to everyone's expectations, it is now predicted that the next day's temperature in Florida will exceed the record cold experienced the previous year. The next day is the day scheduled for the *Challenger* flight. Boisjoly is firmly convinced that this extreme weather condition presents a major threat to the capacity of the O-ring seals to perform their function, and thus to the survival of the flight crew. Time is short. What actions are appropriate to take in such a situation?

## **Answer 1: Inform astronauts of danger.**

Time is short, and the astronauts don't make the decision to fly.

## **Answer 2: Perform more lab tests.**

There is no time for that.

## **Answer 3: Take concerns to the top.**

Yes, and if possible, take others with you who appreciate the situation.

[Continue to A Management Decision Overrides a Recommendation not to Launch](#)

### **Rights**

Use of Materials on the OEC

### **Resource Type**

Case Study / Scenario

### **Topics**

Catastrophes, Hazards, Disasters

Safety

Lab and Workplace Safety

Engineer/Client Relationships

Social Responsibility

### **Discipline(s)**

Aerospace Engineering

Mechanical Engineering

Engineering