

Occupational Crime

Occupational crimes are illegal acts made possible through one's lawful employment. It is the secretive violation of laws regulating working activities.

Employee theft has been estimated to add up to dollar amounts exceeding those of all street crimes combined. Other examples of employee crime are, illegal insider trading and fraudulent stock manipulation.

Industrial Espionage

The development of computer chips is an extremely expensive process. Enormous savings are possible through legal reverse engineering. Even greater savings are possible by illegally acquiring design information from competitors.

Peter Gopal developed numerous contacts that enabled him to buy and sell competitors secrets. Gopal sold National Semiconductor's secrets to Intel Corp. He also stole from Intel to sell to National Semiconductor. Gopal found it easy to buy dozens of major trade secrets from former employees. Unfortunately, white-collar criminals suffer relatively modest penalties. Even though Gopal was convicted, it is estimated that he made millions of dollars from his crimes.

Price fixing

Price fixing consists of the establishment of artificially inflated prices for products by the collaboration of a group of organizations to restrict unwanted competition. The price for these products is much higher than would otherwise exist in the open free market.

The practice of price fixing has been so widespread in the industry for so long that it has become excepted as proper. The Sherman Antitrust Act seeks to ferret out these companies and restrict their price fixing methods.

Endangering Lives

Manville Corp. is the largest producer of asbestos. Manville new from the 1930s and '40s onward that asbestos fibers in the lung cause asbestosis (a debilitating lung disease) and mesothelioma (an incurable cancer). When Manville was finally brought to trial, company officials claimed that some 1300 of the company's own studies of asbestos had mysteriously disappeared from its files. It seems doubtful that many, if any, of Manville's managers will be prosecuted.

Film Recovery Systems was a small corporation that recycled silver from used photographic and x-ray plates. Used plates were soaked in a cyanide solution to leach out their silver content. Standard safety equipment for this process includes rubber gloves, boots, and aprons, as well as respirators and proper ventilation. None of these precautions were used by Film Recovery Systems. An autopsy of one employee, revealed lethal cyanide poisoning. The company president, the plant manager, and a plant foreperson all knew of the dangers of cyanide. Each was sentenced to 25 years in jail and fined ten thousand dollars for the death of the employee.