We Regret to Inform You

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When I put together a comprehensive daily news resource (fancy talk for the *PD&D Design Daily*), I have the opportunity to not only cover the latest news in the industry, but I also have a chance to transform into a maniacal news junkie.

I click on provocative headlines to read about the unfixable economy, to listen to analysts bang their chests and make wild predictions in hopes of creating some new conventional wisdom by sparking a little awareness-building fear, and to sift through the PR rabble — it's a practice similar to listening to white noise for hours with hopes of connecting to voices from the other side (dead people).

I recently had a conversation with a futility analyst who, after crunching the numbers and conferring with his peers, found white noise distillation to be 10 percent less futile than combing the wires and feeds for legitimate news. Stand by for his upcoming 1,000-page report that will be available for purchase at the end of April.

I used to think that Friday night was the wire punch line filled with puff pieces and features similar to those published in *Parade Magazine,* and the free tabloids littering the streets after a mighty wind. As I've found, that Friday night news black hole is a great place to read the news that, I can only speculate, the publishers hope go overlooked.

My latest conspiracy theory/empty tirade is the result of another notch in Exxon Mobil's [1] terrible person belt — singular, because corporations are legally considered people — which I found Friday night as I was exercising my individual right to a quiet weekend.

On Friday, a state district court jury decided that Exxon Mobil failed to warn workers that the offshore drilling pipes, which they spent decades cleaning, contained radioactive contamination.

What a fact to neglect. I'm assuming that they were trying to skate on hazard pay — or the fact that "radioactive contamination" in the workplace is similar to … radioactive contamination in the workplace. I'm not sure a work situation could be worse — try and have Mike Rowe bring his *Dirty Jobs* crew into cancer-causing pipes and see if he's willing to risk his Ford deal for an episode inside a nuclear cavern.

I can imagine the lawsuit years from now. I'll receive a notice in the mail to be a part of a group lawsuit against my company when a former associate finds that we cheaped out on new computer monitors to save a buck, and had for years been working on knock-off Dells that were seeping radioactive sludge.

Pair that with the hidden Adderall in the coffee and the mood-altering chemicals slowly leaked from the sprinkler system, and we're on our way to the next-generation's Erin Brockovich — I've always hoped to be significantly put upon enough to inspire a Lifetime movie. This could be the ticket.

Sure, the 16 former employees can now split the $2 million for the increased cancer risk, but can anyone really put a dollar amount on anticipated loss of life? Possibly a sliding scale based on tumor size and quantity?

As employees, we have the right to believe that our employers have our physical best interests in mind — unless we know going into the job that we're ridding a house of asbestos or spelunking into radioactive contamination. Of course, we'll always expect the corporation to deny any wrongdoing.

As Exxon Mobil's attorney Charles Gay stated, "We still believe that our pipe did not cause any harm." Thanks for caring, Chuck. It may take some time, but here's to hoping you lose sleep if the effects of the radioactive contamination ever show in any of the 16 workers. Meanwhile, many of us will skip deniability and pray that it never does.

What are your thoughts? Should employees expect a minimal standard of safety? Comment below or e-mail rebuttals, legal threats and further deniability to david.mantey@advantagemedia.com [2].

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