

case, strong communication and oversight will be necessary if the company intends to adhere to the ethical principle of valuing its foreign workers' safety as much as the safety of its U.S. workers.

Overseas experience also can provide insights for improving safety at home as well as abroad. Liberty Mutual's Center for Injury Epidemiology (CIE) noticed that during harvest season in Vietnam, people who worked in both agricultural and industrial jobs were injured at far higher rates than those who worked only in one position. The CIE applied that insight to the U.S. workforce and investigated accident rates among employees holding two jobs at the same time. The researchers found much higher accident rates for these workers, both on and off the job. Possible reasons include that they may be less experienced, under more stress, or more poorly trained than employees holding one job.³⁶ Given that many employers today are hiring people to work part-time, they should consider that these workers may try to hold two jobs and be at greater risk of injury. Training programs and incentives should take that risk into account—for example, with more flexible schedules for safety training.

THINKING ETHICALLY

IS IT ETHICAL TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE UNEMPLOYED?

Imagine that your job includes identifying qualified applicants to fill job openings at your company. As you compare two résumés, you see that the applicants' experiences are similar, except that one applicant was working until a month ago, while the other's last job ended a year ago. How will you choose between them?

Reports and some research suggest that some companies are more likely to choose the candidate who was employed until recently. Some job advertisements have even specified that the company will not consider the long-term unemployed. Practical thinking may be behind the practice: if you assume that someone who has been out of work for a long time has been job hunting, you might suspect that other employers have found reasons not to hire him or her. It seems efficient not to repeat the process of uncovering those problems, whatever they might be.

In most states, the practice is legal, despite some efforts to pass laws against it. At the same time, however, it creates conditions that strike many people as unfair and even cruel to those who are already struggling. Following the Great Recession of 2007–2009, the share of unemployed workers who are long-term unemployed spiked to a record high; it has since fallen but remains higher than has been typical of the years following a recession. Especially hard hit have been men and individuals who are Asian American or African American.

In response to these concerns, volunteers with the Society for Human Resource Management have developed guidelines to encourage hiring policies that do

not discriminate "based solely on their unemployment status." The Obama administration urged businesses to pledge not to discriminate against the unemployed, and several hundred have signed the pledge, including Apple, Gap, General Motors, and Walt Disney Company.

Questions

1. If an employer's hiring policies give preference to those who are already employed, what is the impact on (1) the company's performance, (2) workers seeking jobs, and (3) the communities where a company operates? Based on the impact of these policies, would you say they are ethical? Why or why not?
2. Apply the ethical value of fairness to these policies: is it fair to discriminate against the long-term unemployed? Is it fair not to let employers choose employees with a track record of holding a job? What hiring policy best achieves fairness?

Sources: Lisa Guerin, "Discrimination against the Unemployed," Nolo Legal Topics, <http://www.nolo.com>; Karen Kosanovich and Eleni Theodossiou Sherman, "Trends in Long-Term Unemployment," *Spotlight on Statistics* (Bureau of Labor Statistics), March 2015, <http://www.bls.gov>; Mark Peters and David Wessel, "More Men in Prime Working Ages Don't Have Jobs," *Wall Street Journal*, February 5, 2014, <http://online.wsj.com>; Kathleen Hennessey, "CEOs Pledge Not to Discriminate against Long-Term Unemployed," *Los Angeles Times*, January 30, 2014, <http://articles.latimes.com>; Matthew Yglesias, "Statistical Discrimination against the Long-Term Unemployed," *Slate*, April 23, 2013, <http://www.slate.com>.