



What are Regulations for?

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Editorial

Recently, regulations have come to be regarded negatively as an unneeded encumbrance to the smooth running of industry and business. But we should remember what the fundamental goal of regulation is. The intent of all regulations should be to maintain the social framework, by effectively protecting us from unfair or dangerous practices. The more vulnerable constituents of society are generally most vulnerable to hazardous surroundings. The impact of adverse conditions, whether they relate to the physical or the societal environment, is most pronounced upon the less privileged.

To further egalitarian ideals, many regulations started to be put in place over 150 years ago. These include codes of practice concerning child labor and education, workplace safety, and the length of the working week. More recently environmental concerns like air and water quality have been dealt with by the setting of appropriate guidelines. Worker protections from hazardous materials and conditions have also been established. All of these have been enormously useful in creating a vigorous, healthy economy and country. To maintain progress, these rules need to be continually refined as new scientific or societal information develops

There are emerging tendencies to regard the regulations that underlie a civilized society as an impediment to freedom and development. The opposite is the case. A just and strong community needs an impartial framework of rules within which to operate and thrive. Without the reasonable restraints of the law, a more anarchic and regressive culture is inevitable. Loosening the structures that give us predictability and security may benefit a few but will certainly harm the many. Fair and balanced regulations are obstructions only to injustice and exploitation. There is planned curtailment of the activities of government agencies including the Environmental Protection Agency, the Occupational Health and Safety Administration, and the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. These agencies have performed objectively and admirably in the setting of safe exposure levels and ensuring compliance with these.

The deletion or weakening of regulations designed to protect the environment, to ensure human health, or to prevent economic exploitation, is a regressive trend that we cannot afford.