

Mattel Toys Made By Factories that Deceive and Abuse Their Workers

Wednesday, November 16, 2011

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An investigation by China Labor Watch (CLW) and Peoples Solidaires has discovered serious legal and ethical violations at two factories in southern China, which manufacture toys for Mattel, Inc. (NYSE: MAT). Workers at these locations work under unsafe and exploitive conditions that violate numerous tenets of Chinese law. These findings are based on interviews with dozens of workers at both factories, which employ approximately 5,000 people total.

The factories in question are owned by the Jida Toy Co., LTD, located in Shenzhen and the Dongguan Grand Plastic Cement Products Co., LTD., located in Dongguan. At the Jida factory, the workers work for 11 hours a day for as many as 30 days straight in stifling, hazardous conditions under a vague contract that they never receive a copy of. The Dongguan factory, which also makes toys for TOMY Co. LTD. (TSE:7867.T), is even worse to its workers. Workers at this location are charged exorbitant fees for inadequate food, injured at extremely high rates and paid low wages based on a system of impossible quotas. 500 workers who recently attempted to organize to improve conditions at the factory were summarily fired. Finally, the women at this factory, an estimated sixty percent of its workforce, are continually subjected to verbal and physical harassment from male coworkers, with no apparent attempts at redress made by management.

In light of these findings, China Labor Watch urges Mattel to live up to the commitments it made in 1997, when it established its Global Manufacturing Principles (GMP) to ensure that its toys were "manufactured in a responsible and ethical manner." Peoples Solidaires has announced a letter writing campaign to Mattel asking them to change their practices in China, a link to which can be found here http://www.peuples-solidaires.org/appel-urgent-350_chine-mattel . We call on Mattel to immediately take action to improve working conditions and compensation at both of these factories until manufacturing practice there can finally be called responsible and ethical.

Violations discovered at the Jida Toy Co., Ltd. factory include:

- During the application process, workers must pay 45 Yuan (7 USD) to get a required physical examination. There are no further health assessments during a worker's tenure at the factory.
- Workers are not provided an opportunity to look over the labor contract before signing it. Further, they are not allowed to keep a copy for themselves.
- During the busy season, employees worked 11 hours per day for six or seven days each week.
- During August, employees only received one rest day.
- Workers on a night shift do not receive a meal break.
- Employee dorm rooms have no windows and are exposed to the weather outside.
- The temperature in the carving workshop rises to exceedingly high levels.
- Workers are administered safety gloves and face masks, but because of the high temperature in the workshops, they are not used.
- Workers frequently come into contact with hazardous chemicals and materials.
- Factory management is extremely strict and frequently reprimands the employees.
- During the off-season, workers are only able to earn up to 1,800 Yuan/month (283 USD).
- Workers are not introduced to the functions of the trade union and employee representatives at the factory and are not aware of the resources they provide.

Violations discovered at the Dongguan Grand Plastic Cement Products Co., Ltd. factory include:

- Labor contracts are filled out for new hires by the factory. Employees simply need to sign their name.
- The labor contract states that workers will only work 36 hours of overtime per month. In reality, some employees work up to 72 hours of overtime per month.
- The labor contract does not specify any actions to be taken in the event of occupational illness or injury.
- Production quotas are unachievable. Most workers have trouble fulfilling even 80% of the required quotas.

- Workers that do not fulfill at least 80% of their production quota are not allowed to work overtime.
- Workers only earn on average 1,600 RMB/month (252 USD) after salary deductions.
- Workers are not able to purchase social insurance until completing one year of work at the factory.
- Factory management and office workers receive free meals while ordinary workers must pay meal fees.
- The cafeteria for ordinary workers often runs out of food and is typically not able to feed everyone.
- The cafeteria for ordinary workers does not have enough chairs to seat everyone eating in it at any given time.
- Workers are not given any occupational health and safety training.
- Workers are exposed to all sorts of hazardous chemicals, including paint fumes and lead.
- Sewing workers often have their fingers crushed and stabbed by the sewing machines. A report discovered that on average, 17 workers are injured in the sewing workshop each month.
- Work stools are very short and workers often suffer from chronic back pain from constantly bending over their workstations.
- The factory makes it extremely difficult to resign from a position.
- Workshop employees receive different wages for performing the same tasks.
- In October, 500 plastic molding workers went on strike and quit the factory in protest of unequal salaries.
- Female workers are often verbally abused and sometimes molested by factory workers and management.

About China Labor Watch:

Founded in 2000, China Labor Watch is an independent not-for-profit organization. In the past ten years, CLW has collaborated with unions, labor organizations and the media to conduct a series of in-depth assessments of factories in China that produce toys, bikes, shoes, furniture, clothing, and electronics for some of the U.S.'s largest companies. CLW's New York office creates reports from these investigations, educates the international community on supply chain labor issues, and pressures corporations to improve conditions for workers.

Meanwhile, CLW's Shenzhen office works closely with local factories and serves migrant workers in Guangdong Province through several programs. These include the Free Legal Consultation Hotline Program, community training in collective bargaining, and the Train the Trainer Program to enhance the capacity of local labor movements.

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About Peuples Solidaires:

Founded in 1971, Peuples Solidaires relays calls for international mobilization, received from Latin-American, African and Asian organizations to its membership in Europe, who then petition companies and governments. Seven times out of ten, these actions achieve results.

Peuples Solidaires has initiated an "Appel Urgent" to urge Mattel to take responsibility in improving the rights of their workers in China. For more information, please visit their website: http://www.peuples-solidaires.org/appel-urgent-350_chine-mattel 

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