



61 Workers Injured in Explosion at Shanghai Apple Supplier

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 19, 2011—On Dec. 17, 2011, at 3:40 pm local time, a blast occurred in a factory of Riteng Computer Accessory Co located in Songjiang District, Shanghai. 61 workers were hurt in the accident and 23 were hospitalized. The factory belongs to Pegatron Corp and produces metal cases for iPad 2. The blast started at the workshop where the iPad cases got polished. The Songjiang government had already established an investigation committee and started investigation.

According to the preliminary analysis, the blast in Riteng is a result of aluminum dust in the workshop where ipad cases are polished. This is the second reported blast in Apple's supply chain this year. Seven month ago, a similar blast happened in the same workshop of a Foxconn's factory in Chengdu, killing 3 workers and hurting another 15. According to NetEase, there was a lot of aluminum dust in the workshop but the workers were not aware of its potential danger before the blast. Both factories were expanding their production capacity and trying to win more orders from Apple when the blast occurred.

The two blasts exposed serious problems in Apple's supplier chain. China Labor Watch had communicated with several of Apple's supplier factories in China in the hope that they would improve the workers' working conditions. However, some managers in the factories told CLW that Apple has systematic control over the operation of its supplier factories. Apple's supplier factories have to buy raw materials from companies designated by Apple. The design of the assembly line also needs to be approved by Apple. Therefore, the supplier factories have little power to make any changes on the production and the factory management.

The blast in Reiteng is the most recent one of a series of scandals disclosed in Apple's supply chain this year. In October, local officials ordered one of Apple's major supplier factories in Suzhou to temporarily close because of odorous gas emissions. Last month, a workers' strike happened in Shenzhen Jingmo, a major manufacturer of Apple keyboard, due to the long work hours and low salary. Earlier this month, 1,000 workers from Shanghai Hi-P factory, also one of Apple's supplier factories went on strike to protest against an abrupt announcement of factory relocation and unreasonable compensation.

Apple's products are popular all over the world. In the last quarter, Apple sold 11.2 million iPad2. However, there is a sharp contrast between the strong performance of Apple and the poor condition of the workers working on its assembly line in China. Li Qiang, the executive director of China Labor Watch, said that Apple cannot sacrifice the Chinese workers to get high profit and Apple should be held liable for the all the accidents happening in its suppliers' factory in China.

China Labor Watch has written many letters to Apple concerning the labor rights in China but never received response from Apple.

China Labor Watch | 147 W 35 St, Ste 406, NYC, NY 10001
+1-212-244-4049 | clw@chinalaborwatch.org
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