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Bloomberg: Suicides Among China Factory Workers Surge, Labor Group Says

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By Mark Lee

May 26 (Bloomberg) -- Suicides among Chinese factory workers more than doubled in the industrial south, where Apple Inc. supplier Hon Hai Group is trying to stem a series of deaths among its employees, according to a survey by a labor group.

The number of worker suicides in the Pearl River Delta in south China rose to 28 this year from 13 for all of 2009, Li Qiang, executive director of China Labor Watch, said in an e-mail today. The New York-based group interviewed 201 people in China for information about individual suicide incidents among local workers, he said.

Nine employees at the Shenzhen facilities of Hon Hai, the world's biggest contract maker of electronics, committed suicide this year, prompting criticism from worker rights groups. The manufacturer of Apple's iPhone and some Hewlett-Packard Co. personal computers isn't a "sweatshop" and is confident the situation will improve, Chairman Terry Gou said May 24.

China Labor Watch's survey, conducted this month, excludes reports of incidents involving Hon Hai employees, it said.

Hon Hai, based in Taiwan, employs 800,000 people in China, mostly in Shenzhen. The company is also known as Foxconn Technology Group.

The southern Chinese city, home to network-equipment makers Huawei Technologies Co. and ZTE Corp., was China's first Special Economic Zone. Incentives and administrative privileges are offered to companies to boost the country's exports and attract foreign investment.

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