



Apple's supplier denies forcing injured staff to leave

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Administrative staff from a Chinese manufacturer of components for Apple products responded to media and denied that it asked workers harmed by exposure to the chemical n-hexane to leave their jobs.

"But we have authorized the communication department of Jiangsu provincial industrial park to deal with the news press issue," said one company representative.

In the "Apple Supplier Responsibility 2011 Progress Report" on Tuesday, for the first time, Apple acknowledged that 137 workers at the Suzhou facility of Wintek, one of Apple's touch screen suppliers, had suffered adverse health effects following exposure to n-hexane.

N-hexane is a chemical cleaning agents used in some manufacturing processes. It is fast acting and some workers were asked to use it to clean the Apple logo. However, it is also volatile and strongly toxic.

Since the report was released, Apple has been under pressure. To add to this, the affected workers have been located, and new information is coming to light.

In latest news report, Jia Jingchuan, a 27-year-old worker who suffered from exposure to the chemical, told journalists that they were forced to leave the factory in a call last week.

"They promised to give me 140,000 yuan, or 21,253 U.S dollars, in compensation for my departure, but only on condition that I sign an exemption agreement, which means the company would not take any responsibility if my health worsened in the future," he said.

He also added that as far as he knew at least eight victims had already left. But he himself would go nowhere but to stay as he has no idea how can he pay the expensive medical fee even if he leaves.

Jia called for an official written apology for the loss.

"A leading global company like Apple should see to the conduct of its suppliers and ensure that supplier workers receive fair and respectful treatment," Jia told China Daily.

The public is expecting Apple to reform and cooperate with the victimized workers to protect the labor rights and to cope with Apple's sullied image. The elite worldwide brand is traditionally thought of as having excellent performance in corporate social responsibility.

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