FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NEW YORK - On August 1, a devastating explosion occurred at an auto parts factory in Kunshan, Jiangsu Province. According to the most recent Chinese reports, the explosion and ensuing fire has already taken the lives of 68 workers and injured another 187.

China Labor Watch (CLW) expresses its heartfelt condolences for the tremendous losses suffered by the workers' families.

Initial investigations suggest that the explosion was triggered when dense dust in the production facility was ignited. Safety measures like ventilation systems should have prevented such accumulation of dust particles. This tragedy is a result of lax safety standards in the workplace.

This plant, Taiwanese-invested Kunshan Metal Products Co., Ltd, is a designated supplier auto parts for General Motors. GM has a duty to ensure safe production in its supply chain, and it shares responsibility for this deadly explosion.

Just one week ago, at a conference in Beijing, GM was recognized as the fourth-best Fortune 500 company in the area of corporate social responsibility.” True social responsibility for GM includes ensuring that workers making GM's products enjoy a safe and fair working conditions.

UPDATE August 3, 2014 (8:37 PM)

The death toll now stands at 71.

In a follow-up report by The Beijing News, a worker told the reporter, “Before starting work [at the Kunshan Metal Products factory], no one provided training about safety information. No one said that the dust might explode.”

The article goes on to explain that most of the 44 people who died immediately after the explosion probably died of asphyxiation because the dust burned up all most oxygen in the air and the fire left behind a thick smoke.