

Asia Monitor Resource Center, Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims, Center for Environmental Health, Electronics TakeBack Coalition, Hesperian Health Guides, International Campaign for Responsible Technology, IPEN, Supporters for the Health and Rights of People in the Semiconductor Industry, Worksafe

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FOR MORE INFORMATION

Ted Smith, Coordinator
International Campaign for Responsible Technology
(408) 242-6707; tsmith@igc.org

WORLD'S OLDEST PUBLIC HEALTH ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR ACTIONS ON TOXIC EXPOSURES IN FAST GROWING GLOBAL ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

(San Francisco) The American Public Health Association (APHA) today called on the global electronics' industry, public health officials and international agencies to step up efforts to protect workers and communities, citing well documented adverse health effects caused by many toxic chemicals used in the manufacture of electronic and electrical products worldwide.

“The rapid growth of the electronics industry has been accompanied by massive increased use of toxic chemical substances and an increase in adverse health outcomes during manufacturing and end of life stages,” said Joe DiGangi, PhD, IPEN. “Manufacturers need to address this problem up front in the design phase by reducing and eliminating toxic chemicals.”

In making its recommendations, APHA noted the dramatic increase in the production and use of electrical and electronic products, including a global supply chain that works through a complicated web of subcontractors, often located in Asia.

“Weak, or nonexistent regulations, lack of information about the chemicals to which they are being exposed, insufficient oversight, and a failure to consistently report and track disease patterns associated with the industry compound the problem in many Asian manufacturing facilities,” explained Dr. Jeong-ok Kong, an occupational health physician with the Korean Institute of Labor, Safety and Health in Korea who presented data indicating unusually high incidence of cancer among Samsung workers in Korea. “Unfortunately the response of the industry is often to continue the harm by exploiting scientific uncertainty and promoting weak policies under the guise of ‘sound science.’”

Several presentations at the APHA conference documented adverse health outcomes due to exposure to hazardous chemicals in the electronics industry in China, Korea, Malaysia, Indonesia, and elsewhere. Some of the most important health impacts and patterns cited in the APHA resolution include cancers, lung disease, reproductive disorders, congenital anomalies in offspring and musculoskeletal problems from repetitive motion tasks. Companies named in the resolution included Acer, Advanced Micro Devices, Apple, Dell, AU Optronics, Hewlett Packard, Hon Hai (Foxconn), HTC, Intel, Lenovo, LG, Samsung, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, and Young Fast Optoelectronics.

APHA endorsed three key strategies to strengthen occupational and environmental health in the electronics industry, including:

Right to know. The right of workers and communities to know the identities and hazards of chemicals they are being exposed to and ways to protect themselves is a key chemical safety principal.

Prevention through design. When the costs of chemical pollution, clean-up, and adverse health effects on individuals and communities are factored into product cost analyses, it becomes clear that the most effective way to address hazardous chemicals in manufacturing electronic products is to use safer chemical and non-chemical alternatives.

Health surveillance. APHA endorses the use of health surveillance that would include collection of data, analysis, and dissemination of information about injuries, illnesses, hazards and exposures in the electronics sector, with full access for workers to monitoring protocols and results, as well as medical records.

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The **American Public Health Association** is the oldest and most diverse organization of public health professionals in the world and has been working to improve public health since 1872. www.apha.org

Asia Monitor Resource Center focuses on Asian labor concerns and supports a democratic and independent labor movement promoting the principles of labor rights, gender consciousness, and active workers' participation in work-related issues. www.amrc.org.hk

Asian Network for the Rights of Occupational and Environmental Victims is a coalition of victims' groups, trade unions and other labour groups across Asia, all committed to the rights of Victims and for overall improvement of health and safety at the workplace www.anroev.org

Center for Environmental Health protects people from toxic chemicals and promotes business products and practices that are safe for public health and the environment. www.ceh.org

Electronics TakeBack Coalition promotes green design and responsible recycling in the electronics industry. A key goal is to require consumer electronics manufacturers and brand owners to take full responsibility for the life cycle of their products, through effective public policy requirements or enforceable agreements. www.electronicstakeback.com

Hesperian Health Guides develops and distributes health materials that provide knowledge for action, and inspire action for health and are designed in partnership with and for community health workers and others in poor and marginalized communities around the world to prevent and cure disease, and to challenge the social injustices that cause poor health. www.hesperian.org

International Campaign for Responsible Technology connects activists and organizations around the world to make the electronics industry accountable and sustainable. www.icrt.co

IPEN is a leading global organization working to establish and implement safe chemicals policies and practices that protect human health and the environment around the world. IPEN's global network is

comprised of more than 700 public-interest organizations in 116 countries working in the international policy arena and in developing countries. www.ipen.org

Supporters for the Health and Rights of People in the Semiconductor Industry (SHARPS) is composed of independent labor unions, human right groups, occupational safety and health groups, progressive political parties, and workers' organizations, supporting workers rights and occupational health, particularly in Samsung manufacturing facilities

www.stopsamsung.wordpress.com www.cafe.daum.net/samsunglabor

Worksafe is dedicated to eliminating all types of workplace hazards and advocates for protective worker health and safety laws and effective remedies for injured workers. Worksafe watchdogs government agencies to ensure they enforce these laws. www.worksafe.org