

Is Panasonic The Most Unethical Company in Tech?

Elon Musk will do anything for dirty tech deal's to increase his wealth and self-promotion via taxpayer pig troughs. He loves to partner with the dirtiest name in electronics: **Panasonic**.

Apparently, twisted minds think alike. When will the FBI finally shut both of these bad actors down?

Panasonic kills workers. Lies, runs corruption operations, dumps goods, builds toxic factories and well, just take a look:

Panasonic charged with price-fixing on car components



[Dustin Walsh](#) 

[Crain's Detroit Business](#)

A federal grand jury in Detroit indicted another Japanese automotive executive on Tuesday for involvement in an international pricing-fixing conspiracy.

[According to the charges](#) filed in U.S. District Court, Shinichi Kotani, an executive for Panasonic Corp., participated in fixing prices on switches and steering angles sensors for Toyota Motor Corp. vehicles sold in the U.S.

The indictment alleges Kotani and co-conspirators participated in big-rigging meetings in the U.S. and Japan from January 2004 until at least February 2010.

Besides various executive roles in Japan, Kotani served as vice president of automotive systems for Panasonic Automotive Systems Co. of America in Peachtree, Ga., from April 2008 until July 2009.

Panasonic also has an automotive technical center in suburban Detroit. Attempts to reach a company official for comment were unsuccessful. Efforts to locate an attorney for Kotani also were unsuccessful.

Kotani faces a maximum penalty of 10 years in prison and \$1 million in fines for violating the Sherman Act.

The indictment -- part of a broad ongoing U.S. investigation into supplier price fixing -- is the second coming out of Detroit in the past week. Regulators in Europe and Japan have been conducting similar investigations.

On Sept. 19, Ryoji Fukudome and Toshihiko Nagashima, executives for Tokyo-based Fujikura Ltd.,

were indicted for allegedly fixing prices on wire harnesses sold to Fuji Heavy Industries. The parts were allegedly used in Fuji's Subaru vehicle line sold in the U.S.

Earlier this month, Shingo Okuda, an executive at G.S. Electech Inc., **was indicted** by a federal grand jury in the Eastern District of Kentucky for bid-rigging on wire assemblies sold to Toyota.

In July, Panasonic pleaded guilty to its role in the conspiracy and was sentenced to pay a \$45.8 million criminal fine.

The investigation has led to 11 companies and 19 executives, including Kotani, charged in the price-fixing conspiracy.

More than \$874 million in criminal fines have been imposed on the companies, and 14 executives have been sentenced to prison ranging from a year to two years each.

The list of companies that have pleaded guilty include Panasonic, Sanyo Electric Co., Diamond Electric Manufacturing Co., Tokai Rika, Autoliv, TRW Deutschland Holding GmbH, Nippon Seiki Co., Fujikura, Furukawa Electric Co., Denso Corp., Yazaki Corp. and G.S. Electech.

Panasonic will spend up to \$1.6 billion on Tesla gigafactory

Posted by [Charles Morris](#) & filed under [Newswire](#), [The Tech](#).



Panasonic has been involved with Tesla's Gigafactory from the beginning of the project, but until now, it hasn't said exactly how much it plans to invest.

Now Panasonic President Kazuhiro Tsuga has told Marketwatch that the company will invest up to \$1.6 billion, hoping to secure its future in automotive electronics.

Sales to carmakers represented about 15 percent of Panasonic's revenue in 2015, but the company aims to double that over the next four years. That objective is highly dependent on Tesla's ability to meet its goal of selling 500,000 cars a year by 2020, as batteries are expected to provide the lion's share of Panasonic's automotive-market sales.

"We are sort of waiting on the demand from Tesla," Mr. Tsuga said. "If Tesla succeeds and the electric vehicle becomes mainstream, the world will be changed and we will have lots of opportunity to grow."



Tesla and Panasonic plan to build the factory in eight phases, and are currently in the first phase. So far, the Japanese company's investment has been small, but by the time the Gig is fully up to speed, Panasonic will have provided between 1.5 and 1.6 billion dollars, out of a total price tag of 4 to 5 billion, Mr. Tsuga said.

Panasonic employees were expected to arrive in Nevada at the end of 2015 to prepare for the start of cell production. The factory will begin producing batteries this year for Tesla's Powerwall energy storage business.

Source: [Marketwatch](#) via [Green Car Reports](#)

Tags: [Panasonic](#), [Tesla Gigafactory](#)

Panasonic and Its Subsidiary Sanyo Agree to Plead Guilty in Separate Price-Fixing Conspiracies Involving Automotive Parts and Battery Cells

Lg Chem Ltd. Agrees to Plead Guilty to Price-fixing Conspiracy Involving Battery Cells, First Charges Filed in Battery Cell Investigation

Panasonic Corp. and its subsidiary, SANYO Electric Co. Ltd., have agreed to plead guilty and to pay a total of \$56.5 million in criminal fines for their roles in separate price-fixing conspiracies involving automotive parts and battery cells, the Department of Justice announced today. LG Chem Ltd., a leading manufacturer of secondary batteries, has agreed to plead guilty and to pay a \$1.056 million criminal fine for price fixing involving battery cells.

Osaka, Japan-based Panasonic agreed to pay a \$45.8 million criminal fine for its role in the automotive parts conspiracy. SANYO agreed to pay a \$10.731 million criminal fine for its role in the battery cells conspiracy. The guilty pleas against SANYO and LG Chem are the first in the department's ongoing investigation into anticompetitive conduct in the cylindrical lithium ion battery cell industry.

The three-count felony charge against Panasonic was filed in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Separate one-count felony charges were filed against SANYO and LG Chem in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California. As part of the plea agreements, which are subject to court approval, the charged companies have agreed to cooperate in the department's ongoing antitrust investigations.

Panasonic has agreed to plead guilty for its role in a conspiracy to fix prices of switches, steering angle sensors and automotive high intensity discharge (HID) ballasts installed in cars sold in the United States and elsewhere. SANYO and LG Chem Ltd. have agreed to plead guilty for their roles in a conspiracy to fix the prices of cylindrical lithium ion battery cells sold worldwide for use in notebook computer battery packs.

"Panasonic is charged with participating in separate price-fixing conspiracies affecting numerous parts used in cars made and sold in the United States while its subsidiary was also fixing prices on battery cells used by consumers of notebook computers," said Scott D. Hammond, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division's criminal enforcement program. "Pleading guilty and cooperating with the division's ongoing investigations is a necessary step in changing a corporate culture that

turned customers into price-fixing victims.”

According to the first count of a three-count felony charge filed today in U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in Detroit, Panasonic participated in a conspiracy to rig bids for, and to fix, stabilize and maintain the prices of steering wheel switches, turn switches, wiper switches, combination switches and door courtesy switches sold to Toyota Motor Corp. and Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America Inc. in the United States and elsewhere. According to the court document, Panasonic and its co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy from at least as early as September 2003 until at least February 2010.

The second count charges that Panasonic, during this same time period, participated in a conspiracy to rig bids for, and to fix, stabilize, and maintain the prices of steering angle sensors sold to Toyota in the United States and elsewhere. The department said that Panasonic and its co-conspirators agreed, during meetings and conversations, to suppress and eliminate competition in the automotive parts industry by agreeing to rig bids for, and to fix, stabilize, and maintain the prices of steering angle sensors sold to Toyota Motor Corp. and Toyota Motor Engineering & Manufacturing North America Inc. in the United States and elsewhere.

According to the third count of the charge, from at least as early as July 1998 and continuing until at least February 2010, Panasonic and its co-conspirators participated in a conspiracy to suppress and eliminate competition in the automotive parts industry by agreeing, during meetings and conversations, to rig bids for, and to fix, stabilize, and maintain the prices of automotive HID ballasts sold to Honda Motor Co. Ltd. and American Honda Motor Co. Inc., Mazda Motor Corp. and Mazda Motor of America Inc., and Nissan Motor Co. Ltd. and Nissan North America Inc. in the United States and elsewhere.

Including Panasonic, 11 companies and 15 executives have pleaded guilty or agreed to plead guilty and have agreed to pay a total of more than \$874 million in criminal fines as a result of the auto parts investigation. Additionally, 12 of the individuals have been sentenced to pay criminal fines and to serve jail sentences ranging from a year and a day to two years each. The three additional executives have agreed to serve time in prison and are currently awaiting sentencing.

“The FBI remains committed to protecting American consumers and businesses from corporate corruption. The conduct of Panasonic, SANYO, and LG Chem resulted in inflated production costs for notebook computers and cars purchased by U.S. consumers,” said Joseph S. Campbell, FBI Criminal Investigative Division Deputy Assistant Director. “These investigations illustrate our efforts to ensure market fairness for U.S. businesses by bringing corporations to justice when their commercial activity violates antitrust laws.”

According to the one-count felony charge filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California in San Francisco, SANYO and LG Chem engaged in a conspiracy to fix the price of the cylindrical lithium ion battery cells used in notebook computer battery packs from about April 2007 until about September 2008. Cylindrical lithium ion battery cells are rechargeable batteries that

are often incorporated in groups into more powerful battery packs commonly used to power electronic devices.

According to the charges, SANYO, LG Chem and their co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy by, among other things, agreeing during meetings and conversations to price cylindrical lithium ion battery cells for use in notebook computer battery packs to customers at predetermined levels and issuing price quotations to customers in accordance with those agreements. The department also said that SANYO, LG Chem and their co-conspirators collected and exchanged information for the purpose of monitoring and enforcing adherence to the agreed-upon prices and took steps to conceal the conspiracy.

Panasonic, SANYO and LG Chem are each charged with price fixing in violation of the Sherman Act, which carries a maximum penalty of a \$100 million criminal fine for corporations. The maximum fine for the company may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

Today's charges arose from an ongoing investigation in the cylindrical lithium ion battery cells industry being conducted by the Antitrust Division's San Francisco Office and the FBI in San Francisco as well as an ongoing federal antitrust investigation into price fixing, bid rigging and other anticompetitive conduct in the automotive parts industry, which is being conducted by each of the Antitrust Division's criminal enforcement sections and the FBI. Today's automotive parts charges were brought by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section and the FBI's Detroit Field Office, with the assistance of the FBI headquarters' International Corruption Unit. Anyone with information on price fixing, bid rigging and other anticompetitive conduct related to other products in the automotive parts industry should contact the Antitrust Division's Citizen Complaint Center at 1-888-647-3258, visit www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html or call the FBI's Detroit Field Office at 313-965-2323. Anyone with information concerning illegal or anticompetitive conduct in the battery industry is urged to call the Antitrust Division's San Francisco Office at 415-436-6660 or visit www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.htm.

Panasonic Execs Charged In Price-Fixing Sting

By **Kaitlin Ugolik**

Law360, New York -- A grand jury in Michigan on Tuesday indicted former executives of Panasonic Corp., Whirlpool Corp. and Tecumseh Products Co. for their alleged participation in an international refrigerant compressor price-fixing scheme.

The indictment is the first in an ongoing investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice into price-fixing and other anti-competitive practices in the worldwide refrigerant compressor market.

“Cracking down on international price-fixing cartels has been, and will continue to be, among the most significant priorities for the Antitrust Division,” Sharis Pozen, Special Investigator, said.

FBI Probing Kickbacks By Panasonic Supplier

By

- [Ben DiPietro](#)
- [CONNECT](#)

The FBI said this week federal prosecutors charged William McMahon, CEO and co-owner of Trustin Technology, and Sean Volin, who was a manager for Panasonic Corp. of North America at its Secaucus, N.J., office, with wire fraud. McMahon paid kickbacks to Volin to ensure his company would continue to receive contracts from Panasonic that brought tens of millions of dollars to the company, the FBI said in a statement.

Tell Sony and Panasonic: Stop Poisoning Tijuana's Workers!



[Marisa Natale](#)

I am writing to address the manufacturing practices of international corporations in Mexico, especially Tijuana. The workers in their plants are treated inhumanely, and they are destroying the communities around their factories. They are able to escape fair treatment of their workers and responsible chemical use by moving their manufacturing to Mexico – out of sight and out of mind of their customers. The fact that any company would be so deliberately manipulative is disgusting and unbelievable.

The chemicals the workers are constantly exposed to are killing them – they are inhaling lead, burning their skin with chemical adhesives and giving birth to children with defects. They have sores and infections in their lungs and organs. They are going to die young – their children are living in the company waste and filth.

They are offered no rights, no protection, and no fair treatment. To make matters worse, they do not get a reprieve at home. The worker communities surrounding the plants are wastelands of corporate footprints. The rivers run with chemicals – the rivers that serve as drinking, cooking and washing water for the inhabitants. The ground is saturated with dangerous and harmful substances used in their factories. When the rains run, the polluted rivers overrun into people's homes and they must cross them on foot simply to get to work, where they are exposed to even more chemicals.

They are not responsible for the workers' living conditions. They are not responsible for downed power lines, education issues or lack of proper homes. However, nothing I have mentioned in this petition is beyond their control. They can stop the use of dangerous and deadly chemicals in factories. They can clean up their act. They can stop letting their chemicals run off into the workers' water supplies, homes and bodies. They can hire an environmental task force to clean up the communities that they have ruined, which would create legitimate jobs. They can hire engineers to figure out solutions to replace the deadly chemicals with harmless ones that still enable them to produce a high-quality product.

Sony and Panasonic are committed to serving their customers with dignity and respect – but their employees deserve to be treated in the same way. Until Sony and Panasonic change their production practices and clean up the communities they have ruined, I am instituting a boycott of their products. This is unacceptable and will not be allowed to continue – as free Americans we vote with our dollars and we cannot choose to vote for their companies until change happens.

So when you buy a piece of electronic equipment, whether it is a television or a camera cable, to a microwave or a toaster, LOOK FOR THE SONY/PANASONIC LABEL. Sony brands many of its products clearly, but you may have to look carefully for the Panasonic name. Don't allow this to continue. If the profit margins aren't working, Panasonic and Sony will have to change their manufacturing practices, and we have to make it hurt where it counts for them to listen. Aim high! Invite your friends! Sign away! We want as many thousands of signatures as possible!

Letter to

Panasonic Communications

We are writing to you to address your manufacturing practices in Mexico, especially Tijuana. The workers in your plants are treated inhumanely, and you are destroying the communities around your factories. You are able to escape fair treatment of your workers and responsible chemical use by moving your manufacturing to Mexico – out

Read more

Panasonic's Toxic Factories Take Toll On China's Labor Force

By

Jane Spencer and

Juliet Ye

Over the holidays, millions of American children received Chinese-made toys powered by cadmium batteries.

Cadmium batteries are safe to use. They are also cheap, saving American parents about \$1.50 on the average toy, compared with pricier batteries.

But cadmium batteries can be hazardous to make. In southern China, Wang Fengping worked for years in plants that produced cadmium batteries for the likes of Mattel Inc., Toys "R" Us Inc. and Wal-Mart Stores Inc. Like hundreds of her colleagues, Ms. Wang regularly inhaled the toxic red cadmium dust that filled the air in the plant.



Wang Fengping

Now, at 45, Ms. Wang is often too weak to walk. Her kidneys have failed, and her doctors have identified cadmium poisoning as the likely culprit. About 400 other workers at her former employer, Hong Kong-based GP Batteries International Ltd., have been found to harbor unsafe levels of cadmium, a toxic metal like mercury and lead that can cause kidney failure, lung cancer and bone disease.

In recent months, Americans have discovered the dark side of their reliance on cheap Chinese goods. From lead-tainted toys to contaminated pet food, the safety of Chinese products is suddenly an American obsession.

But in China, workers making goods for American consumers have long borne the brunt of a global manufacturing system that puts cost cutting ahead of safety. The search for cheaper production means dirty industries are migrating to countries with few worker protections and lenient regulatory environments.

The nickel-cadmium battery illustrates this trend. Once widely manufactured in the West, the batteries are now largely made in China, where the industry is sickening workers and poisoning the soil and water.

Now, some regulators and companies are taking action. This year, the European Union is banning the sale of nearly all cadmium batteries. A few companies, including Hasbro Inc., are eschewing the battery.

Yet cadmium batteries, a technology dating back to 1899, continue to represent 3% of total battery sales, and are still widely used in toys, power tools, cordless phones and other gadgets sold in the U.S. Besides being inexpensive, they can provide a quick surge of power.

The near-disappearance of the American cadmium-battery industry can be understood from a visit to an overgrown field in Cold Spring, N.Y. Here, the Marathon Battery factory churned out nickel-cadmium batteries for the U.S. military for three decades. After the plant was shuttered in 1979, the cadmium-laden ground became one of the nation's highest-profile superfund sites, sparking a \$130 million clean-up and a class-action lawsuit by nearby residents that was settled for millions of dollars in 1998.

Poisoned Words

Edited excerpts from Ms. Wang's blog, written in Chinese and translated by The Wall Street Journal. Click on the image to go to the blog itself.



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- **From the blog's undated introduction**

Hello friends! Do you want to know how Gold Peak Battery treats its cadmium-poisoned employees? Would you like to hear a personal account from a victim of workplace cadmium poisoning? Panasonic Battery and past and present battery factory workers, would you like to know more specific facts? Then please read my blog, and let's unite in concern for cadmium poisoning!

- **Nov. 20, 2007 -- Global warming, colder heart**

It was hard to get up to eat a bit of breakfast, my head hurt and my whole body felt discomfort, but finally I decided to go outside. Everyone is talking about global warming, temperatures are rising, but today I felt the wind was pretty strong and the temperature colder than yesterday. I felt as if I was sleepwalking through unfamiliar streets. After a while, I gathered my thoughts and returned home.

- **Nov. 11, 2007 -- The visible and the invisible**

Our society is full of love; if a person gets into trouble, others will help. But when it comes to occupational diseases -- a hidden killer -- that cannot be seen, I'm afraid that it's very difficult

for those without personal experience to understand. Most workers have limited knowledge, ultimately you don't know how many hidden killers are in your workplace. The boss knows, but he won't tell you!

- **Nov. 11, 2007 -- First application for an occupational illness diagnosis**

My name is Wang Fengping. I am an engineer in the engineering department of the Gold Peak Battery Factory in Huizhou city, Guandong province. I was born in May 1962 and began work at Gold Peak on August 1, 1995. From that date until December 2005, I was continuously engaged in the production and follow-up design of manufacturing equipment and machinery. *This entry includes an account of all of Ms. Wang's jobs, workplaces, names of co-workers, and whether those employees had symptoms similar to Ms. Wang's.*

- **Nov, 7, 2007 -- Poem, in Chinese and English**

"It is my prayer, it is my longing, that we may pass from this life together / a longing which shall never perish from the earth, / but shall have place in the heart of every wife that loves, / until the end of the time; and it shall be called by my name."

As the U.S. and other Western nations tightened their regulation of cadmium, production of nickel-cadmium batteries moved to less-developed countries, most of it eventually winding up in China. "Everything was transferred to China because no one wanted to deal with the waste from cadmium," says Josef Daniel-Ivad, vice president for research and development at Pure Energy Visions, an Ontario battery company.

Today, only two American companies still make cadmium batteries, and they specialize in high-end batteries for use in equipment such as aircraft engines. U.S. laws require them to follow strict guidelines on worker safety and environmental protection.

In China, government standards on cadmium exposure are in line with those endorsed by the World Health Organization. And without question, there are safe cadmium plants in China.

But having rules and enforcing them are two different things. China has dozens of so-called "hot spots" where the cadmium contamination is similar to levels at U.S. superfund sites. More than 10% of China's arable land is contaminated with heavy metals such as cadmium, according to the State Environmental Protection Agency, and the metals are entering China's food supply. At least a dozen academic studies in the past two years have found unsafe levels of cadmium in fruit and vegetables grown in Chinese soil. In a study published last year, researchers at the Guangdong Institute of Ecology found excessive levels of cadmium in Chinese cabbage grown in Foshan. The battery industry isn't the only source of environmental cadmium contamination in China, but it is a major contributor.

Often, these risks extend to workers. Last year, at least 20 workers at a Panasonic Corp. cadmium-battery plant in Wuxi were found to have elevated levels of the toxin, and two were diagnosed as poisoned. In 2005, 1,000 workers at Huanyu Power Source Co., based in Xinxiang, Henan, were also found with cadmium exposure. Both Panasonic and Huanyu say they have taken care of the affected workers, providing health care and compensation exceeding the requirements of Chinese law.

Yet these findings didn't necessarily result from corporate or government vigilance. The Panasonic-

plant contamination, for instance, came to light after some workers watched a television show about cadmium poisoning -- and got themselves tested.

Protest about contamination at the GP plants has persisted in part because of the determination of Ms. Wang, a GP engineer, to publicize the matter.

Born into a relatively well-off family, Ms. Wang attended university and obtained an engineering degree before hiring on at a newly opened GP factory in the southern Chinese city of Huizhou, a fast-growing center of China's electronics industry. The year was 1995, and GP Batteries, a Singapore-listed unit of Hong Kong-listed Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Ltd. Huizhou, was a prestigious employer, eventually becoming one of the largest makers of nickel-cadmium batteries in China.

As a machine designer, Ms. Wang worked in the management offices of a walled compound of pink-tiled buildings where some 1,500 women in matching blue smocks worked 12-hour days assembling nickel-cadmium battery packs for toys and other products. GP's clients eventually came to include dozens of U.S. companies including Energizer Battery Co., Proctor & Gamble Co.'s Duracell, Spectrum Brands Inc.'s Ray-O-Vac, Hasbro, Mattel, Wal-Mart and Toys "R" Us.

For years, factory workers complained about illnesses -- nausea, hair loss and exhaustion, for instance. But GP management says it wasn't aware of the extent of the cadmium danger. "We knew it was dangerous, but we thought that if it was handled in a reasonable manner you should be OK," says Henry Leung, chief operating officer of GP Batteries. "This is all new for China."

At the factory, Ms. Wang spent the bulk of her time in an office, quietly sketching machine designs. But between 2002 and 2004, she spent long hours in production areas, inhaling cadmium dust, according to a lawsuit filed by Ms. Wang against the factory.

In 2003, some sick workers paid for their own tests at an occupational-disease hospital and learned they had elevated cadmium levels. The news touched off panic on the factory floor, and workers demanded the company pay for cadmium tests. Hundreds of workers eventually went on strike.

GP says it began paying for cadmium checkups in mid-2004, as soon as the region set up facilities that could handle large volumes of cadmium testing. In the initial tests, 177 workers showed levels of cadmium above China's safe-exposure limit, and two qualified as poisoned. Dozens were immediately hospitalized.

Cadmium affects people in radically different ways, so many GP workers with elevated levels aren't sick, but may become so in the years ahead.

Roughly 900 workers quit their jobs, and GP offered cadmium-affected workers one-time exit compensation starting at about \$500. GP says the average package was \$2,100. Many workers say the compensation failed to cover their medical bills.

GP says it has paid out more than \$1 million in compensation and medical care for affected workers and has exceeded the legal requirements. "We want to take care of workers," says GP's Mr. Leung, but he says some workers are feigning sickness to obtain money. "They want to be recorded as poisoned, so people will keep giving them compensation," he says.

Ms. Wang watched on the sidelines as the bitter saga unfolded at her factory. During her nine years at the factory, she rarely had contact with rank-and-file workers, and her \$540 weekly salary was nearly triple what they earned. While other workers ate in a cafeteria, Ms. Wang sat in a manager's dining room with table cloths and porcelain dishes.

But in October of 2004, when GP first paid for companywide cadmium tests, Ms. Wang's result came back showing cadmium levels above the safe-exposure limit set by the Chinese government. However, to qualify for continuing monitoring, China's occupational-disease laws require two consecutive positive tests. A second test showed Ms. Wang's cadmium level in the normal range, disqualifying her for assistance.

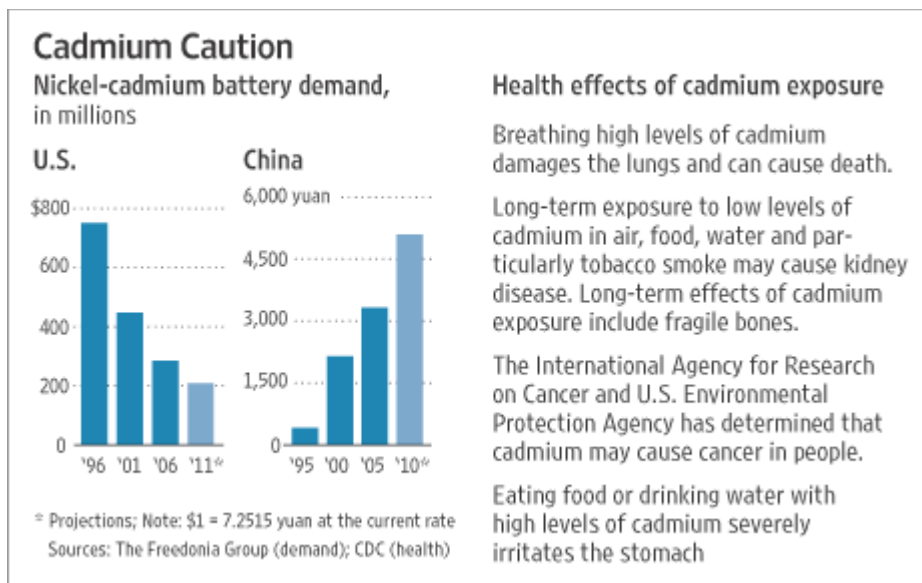
Three occupational-medicine doctors -- in London, Sweden and the U.S. -- who reviewed Ms. Wang's medical records for The Wall Street Journal say her initial test showed clear indications of kidney damage, a marker of possible cadmium poisoning.

"There's no doubt that in 2004, she had smoking-gun-type indicators of kidney damage, and in a person who works with cadmium, that should not be ignored," says Dr. Arch Carson, an expert in occupational medicine and environmental sciences at the University of Texas School of Public Health.

GP says it relies on medical experts at government-run occupational-disease hospitals in the nearby city of Guangzhou to determine if workers required monitoring.

Having no symptoms, Ms. Wang continued playing badminton and jogging. But in early 2006, she began to feel extremely weak, and suffered headaches. Her skin began to age rapidly, and her eyes became sunken hollows. In November 2006, Ms. Wang was diagnosed at a local hospital with chronic renal failure that doctors said would likely shorten her life.

On Dec. 25, 2006, Ms. Wang approached GP management with news of her diagnosis. She requested that GP send her to the occupational-disease hospital in Guangzhou, which has facilities for treating cadmium exposure.



ENLARGE

A stalemate ensued. The company says it was willing to help, but that Ms. Wang refused to follow local legal procedures. Local laws required that Ms. Wang visit a local hospital first, in order to be referred to the main occupational-disease hospital in Guangzhou. The company says Ms. Wang demanded they send her directly to the Guangzhou hospital, in violation of regulations.

In May, Ms. Wang sued the factory for \$400,000 in compensation and medical care. To build her case, Ms. Wang used her access to company computers to download files that showed other workers in her department were exposed to cadmium. GP says there is no evidence that Ms. Wang's illness is related to cadmium, and doctors at the Guangzhou Occupational Disease Hospital say her kidney failure doesn't meet the criteria for occupational disease.

By last summer, Ms. Wang's health was failing. According to medical records from a hospital in Nanjing, she was admitted with a fever and a respiratory infection. Doctors there treated her for chronic renal failure, and listed "long-term exposure to cadmium-containing substances" as a possible cause, according to her medical records.

As workers, including Ms. Wang, sought to bring attention to the issue, a public-relations battle erupted. In 2005, GP filed a lawsuit against labor-rights groups representing the workers, charging libel. The case is moving through Hong Kong courts.

On their way to an interview with a Wall Street Journal reporter in August, Ms. Wang and several colleagues were pulled over by police and detained for nearly 13 hours in a Huizhou police station, according to several sources familiar with the incident. A person present at the Huizhou police station says the workers were told they would be charged with treason if they spoke to the media again. The Huizhou government says its police detained no battery workers.

Ms. Wang stopped answering her cellphone after the incident with the Huizhou police. But she began writing a blog to advise victims of cadmium poisoning. A recent post, in Chinese, said, "Basically, occupational disease could be prevented but it costs money. Money is the gold of bosses. And for them, the lives of workers are worthless."

After revelations of its cadmium-battery problems arose, GP quit making them at its plants, and now outsources that production to independent factories in China.

In America, five years after Hasbro stopped using nickel-cadmium batteries, Mattel and Toys "R" Us are yet to follow suit, but say they are exploring alternatives. Wal-Mart no longer purchases cadmium batteries from GP but declined to comment on whether it still uses them in its products.

Mattel says cadmium batteries have some performance advantages over alternatives, such as a better ability to retain a charge when not used for long periods.

—Sky Canaves in Hong Kong contributed to this article.

Panasonic 'covered up' poisoning at battery factory, report claims

By Taxy Staff - Sat, 04/28/2007 - 11:51.

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Panasonic hid evidence that workers were poisoned at a battery factory, a report in a Chinese newspaper claims. Even pregnant women were not warned they might have been exposed to high levels of Cadmium, a potentially lethal heavy metal, the report alleges, quoting a manager who says he was laid off when he threatened to turn whistleblower.

The allegations are being made by a former human resources manager according to an article in the [21st Century Economic Report](#), a newspaper published by China's respected [Southern Daily Group](#) (Linked sites are in Chinese).

Panasonic has not yet responded to a request for comment on the case, which is claimed to have taken place over the past three years at a factory (photo) manufacturing rechargeable Nickel-Cadmium batteries in Wuxi, north of Shanghai. Exposure to even tiny amounts of Cadmium is known to increase the risk of cancer and can lead to a variety of crippling and potentially-fatal health conditions.



'Health reports buried', claim

The newspaper's source, named as ex-human resources manager, Pan Wei, claims he was hired by the company in October 2006. Later that same month, he told reporters, the company doctor gave him safety reports on Cadmium exposure to sign.

The original health tests showed that ten staff had Cadmium levels above safety limits, Mr. Pan said. However, an overall safety report stated that no staff had any such problem.

The doctor told Pan that this was normal procedure, and staff with dangerous Cadmium exposure were rotated to different work until their health reports improved, the ex-manager alleges.

Continued for three years?

According to the newspaper article: “Pan realized that since 2003, the company has handled the staff health examination every year, and every year the examination says all the staff have no problem, so none of the staff have been notified of the real poisonous Cadmium level”

The story continues: “The doctor said, this is our normal procedure. The director of the factory has signed his name, and higher people above have signed their names too. So you sign your name and there will be no problem”

Pregnant workers affected, report claims

Some workers had left the factory to work at other jobs where they might be exposed to Cadmium poisoning, without realizing they already had

dangerous levels of Cadmium in their bodies, Pan alleges. In addition, he says, some of those affected were pregnant. Pan claims he was laid off after he demanded executives warn these workers of the risk. Panasonic informed him he had not performed satisfactorily during his probationary employment period, he says.



Panasonic is a trading name of Japan's giant Matsushita Electric Industrial group. The company has not yet responded to a request for comment on this case.

Public perception

Leading Japanese firms such as Matsushita are major investors in Chinese manufacturing. However, Chinese people have mixed perceptions about Japan. While they admire the country's advanced economy and culture, they also tend to believe that Japan has abused China in the past, particularly during the Second World War, and has failed to apologize adequately.

This negative perception has been fed by a heavy diet of official anti-Japanese propaganda, including school text books which harp upon Japan's historical misdeeds.

In this environment, Japanese firms operating in China are highly sensitive to negative publicity which might combine with smouldering anti-Japanese sentiment to ignite a firestorm of criticism.

Update April 29: ' The [website](#) of the Wuxi battery factory was taken offline yesterday' - removed this line as the website was only taken offline temporarily and is currently accessible with no obvious changes from the previous version - thanks to anonymous commenter below.

Red Dust - documentary on cadmium poisoning in Chinese women battery workers for Tesla Cars

Aug 06, 2010



Red Dust, a documentary directed by Karin Mak, chronicles the struggle for justice by women workers in China who have been poisoned by cadmium while manufacturing nickel-cadmium batteries.

Click [here](#) to view the trailer.

Cadmium has been in the international and USA news lately as found in jewellery and McDonald's Shrek glasses. However, the majority of cadmium is used for production of nickel-cadmium batteries, a type of rechargeable battery.

Cadmium is a very toxic heavy metal and the brave women in the film live with its debilitating effects in addition to risking their safety in their fight for justice. It covers themes of workers' rights, globalization, occupational safety and health, China's economic development and women's rights.

Red cadmium dust drifted freely in China's nickel-cadmium battery factories owned and operated by GP BATTERIES (GP), one of the world's top battery manufacturers. Ren, a migrant worker originally from Sichuan, suffers from frequent headaches and breathing difficulties. If untreated, the cadmium poisoning can lead to kidney failure, cancer, and even death.

Red Dust tells an unexamined side of China's economic development: the resistance, courage, and hope of workers battling occupational disease, demanding justice from the local government and global capital. Chinese migrant workers are deemed disposable by factory owners and are stereotypically viewed as quiet and passive victims. However, Ren and other GP workers (Min, Fu, and Wu) fight back. Labor issues are very sensitive in China, and workers who publicly discuss their struggles do so at great risk. The audience discovers along with the filmmaker, a Chinese American, the horrors of the global assembly line.

This documentary is about women who are the engine of the global economy. Although the film takes place in China, the characters' experiences are universal to workers on the margins around the world, where poverty, migration, and workplace hazards are common realities.

The film is 20 minutes, in Mandarin and Sichuanhua, with English subtitles.

What is Cadmium Poisoning?

Cadmium (cd) is a heavy metal used primarily in the production of nickel-cadmium batteries. Workers exposed to cadmium can suffer symptoms such as memory loss, dizziness, headaches, lack of strength, and pain in the back and limbs. In 2006, the European Union banned cadmium in electronics due to its extremely toxic properties.

Workers who suffer from cadmium poisoning may not look sick, and serious health issues may take several years to arise. Once cadmium enters the body, it takes between seven to thirty years for the body to flush it out, which is particularly harmful for the kidneys. Cadmium poisoning has also been linked to kidney failure and cancer. The effects of cadmium poisoning can be fatal. In 2006, Fu Hong Qin, a co-worker of the women featured in RED DUST, died from kidney failure. She had worked at a GP BATTERIES factory for 2 years.

Unsafe workplaces are not uncommon in China. According to the country's State Administration for Work Safety (SAWS) 2004 report, China has the world's highest number of occupational disease victims and deaths resulting from occupational diseases.

Click [here](#) to read more.

The director

Karin T Mak was born and raised in St. Louis, Missouri, USA to immigrants originally from Hong Kong. She spent several years on immigrant and workers' rights campaigns in California. In 2003, she received the prestigious New Voices Fellowship to work with Sweatshop Watch, a Los Angeles-based non-profit educating the public about globalization. Mak is winner of the 2008 Roy W. Dean LA Film Grant.

Panasonic also face issue like hiding evidence that workers were poisoned at a battery factory in China . During that time, Panasonic are manufacturing rechargeable Nickel-Cadmium batteries in Wuxi, north of Shanghai. The worker were not warned when they have been exposed to high level of Cadmium, a potentially lethal heavy metal that can lead to a variety of crippling and potentially-fatal health conditions thus increasing the risk of death

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