

Chinese worker commits suicide over missing iPhone

July 22 2009, By WILLIAM FOREMAN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- An employee at a factory that makes iPhones in China killed himself after a prototype went missing, and Apple Inc. responded Wednesday by saying its suppliers are required to treat workers with dignity and respect.

The dead worker, Sun Danyong, 25, worked in product communications at Foxconn Technology Group, a Taiwanese firm that makes many [Apple](#) products at a massive factory in the southern city of Shenzhen, near Hong Kong.

Although Apple and Foxconn have confirmed Sun's suicide, they have not provided details about the death's circumstances, which have been reported by the state-run Southern Metropolis Daily, one of the region's most popular papers.

There's tremendous pressure on employees dealing with Apple's new products to maintain a high-level secrecy over the gadgets, traditionally launch amid great suspense and a big marketing buzz. Apple is also a constant target of prying journalists, rabidly faithful customers and competitors who make great efforts to try to steal a peek at its latest gadgets.

Sun was responsible for sending [iPhone](#) prototypes to Apple, and on July 13 he reported that he was missing one of the 16 units in his possession, the newspaper reported. His friends said company security guards searched his apartment, detained him and beat him, the paper reported.

In the early morning of July 16, Sun jumped from the 12th floor of his apartment building, the paper said.

Jill Tan, an Apple spokeswoman in Hong Kong, issued only a brief statement about the incident.

"We are saddened by the tragic loss of this young employee, and we are awaiting results of the investigations into his death," Tan said. "We require our suppliers to treat all workers with dignity and respect."

Foxconn said in a statement that its security chief has been suspended and turned over to the police.

The security official, Gu Qinming, was quoted by the Southern Metropolis Daily as saying he never hit Sun. Gu reportedly said that after three security personnel searched Sun's apartment and did not find the phone, the employee was ordered to go to Gu's office on July 15.

The security chief said he didn't think Sun was being truthful about the phone, the paper reported.

"I got a bit agitated. I pointed my finger at him and said that he was trying to shift the blame," Gu was quoted as saying.

He added, "I was a little angry and I pulled his right shoulder once to get him to tell me what happened. It (the beating) couldn't have happened," the paper reported.

Local police declined to respond to questions from The Associated Press.

Foxconn executive Li Jinming said in a statement that Sun's death showed that the company needed to do a better job helping its employees

with psychological pressures.

"Sun Danyong graduated from a good school. He joined the company in 2008. He had an extremely bright future. The group and I feel deep pain and regret when a young person dies like this."

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