

China factories break labor rules

April 19 2010, By WILLIAM FOREMAN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Two factories that make Microsoft Corp. products in southern China violated overtime regulations and failed to properly register the use of workers aged 16 to 18, officials said Monday.

The problems at the plants in the city of Dongguan were initially raised last week by the National Labor Committee, a New York-based nonprofit that monitors the treatment of foreign workers by U.S. companies. The group alleged that the teen laborers worked long shifts and were not allowed to use bathrooms during working hours at the plants, owned by Taiwan-based KYE Systems Corp.

The [factories](#) make Webcams, computer mice and Xbox controllers for [Microsoft](#), the world's biggest software company.

Investigators with Dongguan's human resources bureau said in a report that factories are allowed to hire workers between the ages of 16 and 18 as long as the laborers are registered with the authorities. The KYE factories had 385 such workers - most supplied by vocational schools - and 326 weren't properly registered, the report said.

Employees were also forced to work an excessive amount of overtime in March, clocking about 280 hours, the report said. Copies of the labor contract also weren't given to employees, the document said.

But officials said that based on interviews with workers, there were no restrictions against using the restroom during shifts. The report said the company's policy was to give workers 10-minute breaks for every two

hours worked.

KYE Systems Corp. spokesman Lai Jin-hui told The Associated Press, "Assembly line workers are allowed to go to bathroom only if they report the need."

Lai insisted that factories did nothing wrong regarding overtime and had followed regulations that limit the workweek to 60 hours. But Lai acknowledged that the factories failed to properly register [workers](#) and would now fix the problem.

The human resources bureau report said the factories have been ordered to comply with the law and would be monitored closely.

Last week, Microsoft said it does quarterly onsite assessments and gets weekly reports from KYE about certain labor and safety criteria. The software maker said a team of independent auditors would visit the factories and monitor the situation pending results of its inspection.

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