

# Samsung commissions semiconductor safety study

July 15 2010, By KELLY OLSEN , AP Business Writer

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In this photo taken on March 25, 2010, South Korean activists, wearing protective clothing, participate in a rally near the Samsung semiconductor factory in Yongin, south of Seoul, South Korea, Thursday, July 15, 2010. Samsung Electronics said Thursday, July 15, 2010, it has commissioned an independent health and safety review of its semiconductor factories in South Korea after employee illnesses and deaths raised fears of cancer risks. (AP Photo/ Lee Jin-man)

(AP) -- Samsung Electronics said Thursday it has commissioned an independent health and safety review of its semiconductor factories in South Korea after employee illnesses and deaths raised fears of cancer risks.

The yearlong investigation will be carried out by an independent team of leading occupational health and safety experts "who will be given complete access to Samsung's [semiconductor manufacturing](#) facilities,"

the company said in a statement.

[Samsung Electronics](#) Co. announced in April that it planned such a study. It has been attempting to allay public anxieties after a January lawsuit against a government agency involving six people who developed leukemia and lymphoma they claim was caused by exposure to radiation and the carcinogen benzene in the company's chip factories.

Suwon, South Korea-based Samsung says that between 1998 and this year 25 chip plant workers were diagnosed with leukemia or lymphoma and 10 died, according to spokesman James Chung. The company said in April when it announced the plan for an independent probe that there was no risk of contracting cancer at its semiconductor facilities.

Samsung, a major force in the global electronics industry, is the world's largest manufacturer of computer memory chips, flat screen televisions and [liquid crystal displays](#).

"We have assembled a group of well-respected international experts to ensure this is an objective and transparent review," Cho Soo-in, president of Samsung's memory division, said in the statement. "We want to ensure this process addresses any questions about the safety of our semiconductor manufacturing facilities."

Samsung said that the review will be led by Environ International, which it described as an international environment and health consultancy. It said it would be carried out in consultation with experts from academic institutions including the Harvard University School of Public Health.

The investigation will consist of a "complete review that will evaluate general health and safety risks and hazards, use of carcinogenic substances, potential correlations between the workplace and employee illnesses, and other areas that may be independently identified by the

inspection team," the statement said.

The company also said that previous studies by the Korea Occupational Safety and Health Agency and a private consulting company recommended by the South Korean government found no correlation between the work environment and employee illness.

Samsung took the initiative in discussing the cancer issue following the March 31 death of Park Ji-yeon, a 23-year-old woman who worked at a Samsung chip plant and had leukemia. She was a plaintiff in the lawsuit.

Chip manufacturing requires numerous chemicals. Benzene has been frequently used as a solvent in the industry, though Samsung says it has never employed it.

Supporters of the lawsuit have held small, yet vocal, demonstrations in front of Samsung's Seoul headquarters building as well as at a chip plant south of the capital over the cancer concerns.

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Citation: Samsung commissions semiconductor safety study (2010, July 15) retrieved 27 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-07-samsung-commissions-semiconductor-safety.html>

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