

# **Study at Samsung says cancers unrelated to work**

July 14 2011, By KELLY OLSEN , AP Business Writer

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(AP) -- A study commissioned by Samsung into cancers among six of its semiconductor workers found they were unrelated to exposure to chemicals on the job but the electronics giant is not yet releasing the full results.

U.S.-based Environ International Corp. on Thursday announced the broad findings of a study it conducted over the past year of several Samsung chip manufacturing facilities.

Samsung commissioned the investigation last July to try and allay public anxieties. The company says that 26 current or former workers in production, research and development or office work at semiconductor facilities have contracted leukemia or lymphoma since 1998, while 13 have died.

The South Korean company said it had no plans to immediately publish the study as doing so could compromise the trade secrets of Samsung and its suppliers.

The six cases covered by the study have also been the subject of an ongoing court case in South Korea. Late last month, the Seoul Administrative Court ruled that two of them could be related to exposure to toxic chemicals on the job. Four of the people have died.

Samsung Electronics Co. is the world's largest manufacturer of memory chips used in personal computers, mobile phones, digital cameras and

other products.

Environ said in a statement that that Samsung's current manufacturing operations fall "well within accepted standards" for exposure to chemicals and other substances.

Environ officials, including CEO Steve Washburn, appeared at a press conference held at Samsung's Giheung semiconductor plant in the city of Yongin, south of Seoul.

"The study further concluded that the scientific evidence does not support a link between workplace exposure and the diagnosed cancers in six cases that underwent specific review," the company said.

It said that in four of the six cancer cases it studied "there was no evidence" of exposure to an agent that would have caused the illnesses, while in the other two "exposures to cancer-causing agents were substantially below levels of exposure associated with an increased risk of cancer." Those agents included formaldehyde and ionizing radiation.

Samsung, which has long said its facilities are safe, welcomed the results. Still, Kwon Oh-hyun, the Samsung executive in charge of semiconductors, said the company would not immediately release the Environ study.

"We will consider disclosing the report," he said, after discussing the issue internally and with suppliers.

That stance disappointed activists supporting plaintiffs in the court case.

Kong Jeong-ok, an occupational health physician and a member of a support group, called for Samsung to act fast.

"First, disclose the full report," Kong said after the presentation, which she attended. She also urged Samsung to consult with civil groups, experts and the government before doing so to ensure "transparency and reliability."

Paul Harper, the Environ official who oversaw the study, said that releasing the report was up to Samsung. He also declined to disclose how much Samsung paid his company to carry out the probe, citing client confidentiality.

He also said that Environ focused on the six specific cancer cases at Samsung's request.

Kwon denied that Samsung commissioned the study so it could be used as evidence in the ongoing court case.

The Seoul Administrative Court last month ordered the government's Korea Workers' Compensation & Welfare Service to compensate the families of two dead women. It ruled that while the exact cause of their deaths has not been determined, it could be presumed that they were exposed to toxic chemicals and radiation on the job.

It upheld the service's findings, however, that the cancer cases of three other workers, two of whom are alive, were unrelated to their work at Samsung, though their attorneys are appealing the ruling.

Five of the six original cases are currently being contested in court as the family of another worker who died last year dropped out.

Samsung is not a defendant in the case, but has cooperated with the welfare service. Yonhap news agency reported that the agency has filed an appeal in the two rulings it lost.

Environ said it carried out the study with Samsung's full cooperation. It also said the study's design and implementation were reviewed by an independent advisory panel which included academic experts from institutions such as Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Yale, but that they were not asked to endorse the conclusions.

Separately, Samsung said Thursday that it plans to expand investments in a research institute it runs devoted to semiconductor health and safety and would also upgrade health programs for employees.

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