

Independent group inspecting Apple suppliers

February 13 2012, By PETER SVENSSON , AP Technology Writer

(AP) -- Apple said Monday that an independent group, the Fair Labor Association, has started inspecting the working conditions in the Chinese factories where its iPads and iPhones are assembled.

The FLA team began the inspections Monday morning at Foxconn City in Shenzhen, China, Apple said. The complex employs and houses hundreds of thousands of workers.

Foxconn, a unit of Taiwan's Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. employs an estimated 1 million to 1.1 million people in China at a series of huge factory campuses. Working conditions at the factories have been a focus of criticism.

A New York Times story published Jan. 26 reported on accidents and long hours in Foxconn factories, based on workers' accounts. Foxconn disputed allegations of back-to-back shifts and crowded living conditions.

Cupertino, Calif.-based Apple has been conducting its own audits of working conditions at factories where its gadgets are assembled since 2006. A month ago, it took the additional step of joining Washington-based FLA, a group of companies and universities focused on improving labor practices.

Apple is the first technology company to become a member. It committed at the time to have the FLA inspect its suppliers, who have

pledged full cooperation. The FLA plans to interview thousands of employees at several Apple suppliers about working and living conditions. The audits will cover facilities where more than 90 percent of Apple products are assembled.

The FLA's findings and recommendations will begin to be posted on www.fairlabor.org in early March.

More information: <http://www.apple.com/supplierresponsibility>

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