

# HP tightens worker rules for China suppliers (Update)

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Computer maker Hewlett-Packard headquarters on January 12, 2010 in Diegem, Belgium. US computer maker Hewlett-Packard said Friday it is cracking down on abuses of student workers and temporary labor used by its suppliers in China.

ELGAUS computer maker Hewlett-Packard said Friday it is cracking down on abuses of student workers and temporary labor used by its suppliers in China.

The move by HP came as Silicon Valley neighbor and rival Apple

continued a program to improve conditions for employees at facilities in China that produce its coveted gadgets.

HP announced new guidelines for student and temporary workers in China intended to reinforce local labor laws and introduce "beyond regulatory expectations" for suppliers.

"Student and temporary workers are two very vulnerable groups within the Chinese workforce," said Sanna Johnson, executive director of the Center for Child Rights and Corporate Social Responsibility in China.

"They are often entering the workplace with limited experiences and support."

HP cooperated with the center on the changes.

"We have worked closely with leading Chinese stakeholders to develop our new student and temporary worker guidelines to ensure the highest standards of ethical workforce management," said HP senior vice president of supply chain operations Tony Prophet.

Along with mandating fair compensation, HP guidelines require that workers be free to quit or lodge grievances without facing reprisals.

The number of student workers must be limited to "acceptable levels" with the majority of employees having full-time status, according to HP. In addition, student workers' jobs must complement their primary areas of study.

HP said the new guidelines take effect immediately and that compliance will be tracked with ongoing audits as well as through a key performance indicator program that collects performance data about suppliers.

HP boasts an extensive supply chain that spans more than 45 countries and territories.

Apple last year ramped up its vigilance regarding underage workers, excessive overtime and other abuses at China plants contracted to make its devices.

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