Microsoft Investigates Child Labor In Chinese Supplier

SEATTLE (AP) — Microsoft Corp. said Thursday it will investigate reports of poor working conditions at a factory in southern China that makes some of its products.

The world's largest software maker was responding to a report from The National Labor Committee, a nonprofit that looks into the treatment of foreign workers by U.S. companies. On Tuesday, the group published a report detailing long working hours, low pay, insufficient food and few freedoms for workers at the KYE Systems Corp. factory in Dongguan, China.

The factory makes Microsoft-brand Webcams, computer mice and Xbox controllers.

Included in the report are claims that 16- and 17-year-olds work 15-hour shifts for about 50 cents an hour, are prohibited from talking or using the bathroom during working hours, sleep crammed in 14-person dorm rooms and are only allowed to leave the factory grounds at certain times.

In a blog post, Microsoft said it has rigorous standards in place for suppliers such as KYE, and those suppliers are audited every year. Microsoft said it also 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 are headed to the KYE factory, and it will place monitors at the factory pending results of its inspection.

"We will take all appropriate steps to ensure the fair treatment of the KYE workers," said Brian Tobey, a corporate vice president of manufacturing and operations at Microsoft, in the blog post.

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