China Urges Safety After Deadly iPad Plant Explosion

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BEIJING (AP) — Beijing urged Foxconn Technology Group and other Taiwanese companies on Wednesday to ensure safety in their mainland China factories after a fatal blast at a facility that makes Apple iPads.

Last Friday's explosion at the facility owned by Foxconn, Apple's main manufacturing contractor, killed three employees. Foxconn blamed combustible dust in a workshop that polishes products and suspended production at the factory in the western city of Chengdu, prompting questions about whether supplies of the popular iPad 2 might be disrupted.

"We hope Foxconn and other Taiwan-invested enterprises can learn from this, carry out their safety responsibilities, strengthen internal inspection and management, root out hidden dangers in a timely way and ensure safe production," said Fan Liqing, a spokesman for Beijing's Taiwan Affairs Office.

Taiwanese companies have invested billions of dollars in the mainland despite their government's lack of formal ties with Beijing, which claims the self-ruled island as part of its territory.

Fan said the Chengdu explosion was believed to be a "production safety incident" but gave no details.

Foxconn, a unit of Taiwan's Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., manufactures mobile phones, computers and other products under contract for Apple Inc. and other global brands such as Hewlett Packard Inc. The company employs an estimated 1 million to 1.1 million people in China at a series of huge factory campuses.

Other Taiwanese-owned factories in China producing clothing, toys and other goods employ millions more. They are moving into higher-value electronics, computer chips and other products.

Foxconn produces the iPad 2 in Chengdu and at its flagship China manufacturing campus in Shenzhen, near Hong Kong.

The company has not said how iPad 2 production might be affected, but research firm IHS iSuppli said lost output might total 500,000 units at a time when Apple says it is struggling to keep up with strong demand.

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