

# **Crushed**

*A Survey of Work Injuries and Treatment  
in the Pearl River Delta*

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## Introduction

This summer, the Chinese State Administration of Work Safety revealed that 15,000 people die annually in the PRC due to industrial accidents.<sup>1</sup> The state-operated Xinhua News Agency went on to report that work-related injuries and diseases would result in direct economic losses of 100 billion RMB (US\$12 billion) this year; unofficial sources estimated these losses to be much higher. By all accounts, the rate and seriousness of occupational injuries has reached critical levels, poisoning the economic prosperity and threatening the stability China has achieved over the past two decades. In the Pearl River Delta alone, the fastest-growing industrial region in China and home to millions of migrant workers, at least 30,000 work-related injuries occur every year.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the immediacy of the problem and both domestic and international calls to remedy it, the Chinese government has been slow to respond effectively. No reporting mechanisms have been established to document either the cases of the thousands of workers injured on the job every year, or the poor working conditions that cause these injuries. With this paucity of information in mind, China Labor Watch undertook a large project last year in the hopes of injecting at least some preliminary data into the public discourse, to be based on the situations of workers as told by workers themselves. The information and projections that follow are based on the data from that project, taken in interviews with 177 workers suffering from work-related injuries in fourteen hospitals in the Dongguan and Shenzhen metropolitan areas. While some of our findings confirmed publicly held notions, one notable discovery was the direct relationship in our cases between increased fatigue and both work injury frequency and seriousness. All of our findings, however, describe a situation in need of considerable improvement and innovation to bring working conditions in Southern China to a humane and lawful level.

## Data and Analysis

### Method

The information in this report was gathered in June and August 2004 and in January and March 2005 from 177 workers in fourteen hospitals in the Dongguan and Shenzhen metropolitan areas. Dongguan is a large city located on the main highway between Guangzhou and Hong Kong (see Map A). A well-known industrial center with a high concentration of Taiwanese-owned factories, it is home to over 15,000 firms manufacturing everything from textiles to furniture. It is also home to an estimated 6 million people, 3.5 million of whom are unregistered or migrant workers.<sup>3</sup> Dongguan's population growth, however, pales beside its current economic growth, which began when China opened to foreign investment in the 1980's. The Shenzhen Special Economic

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<sup>1</sup> XINHUANET.com, 我国应尽快将工保险引入安全生产监督管理机制 (woguo yingjin kuaijiang gongshangbaoxian yinru anquan shengchan jianjuguanlijizhi) July 13, 2005, news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-07/13/content\_3216098.htm

<sup>2</sup> China News Daily (中国青年报), 珠江三角洲农民工生存状况调查 (Zhujiang sanjiaozhou nongmingong shengcun zhuangkuang diaocha), January 2, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> Dongguan City Government, <http://english.dg.gov.cn/POPULATION.htm>

Zone was the first of its kind in China, and ushered in China's new era of foreign investment with preferential economic policies, proximity to Hong Kong and a population of several million. It quickly became a major manufacturing center for a range of goods, in particular high-tech components and services. The values of Shenzhen's and Dongguan's exports rank second and third, respectively, in all of China, bested only by those of Shanghai.<sup>4</sup>

*Map A: Southern Guangdong Province, China*<sup>5</sup>



Research visits were unannounced, so as to ensure access to injured workers, and injured subjects were chosen at random in the hope that the study pool might more accurately reflect a profile of the entire Dongguan working population. Access to hospitalized workers was the greatest barrier to our staff, as local hospitals often have relationships with the local factories that provide most of their patients. CLW investigators conducted ward interviews without any hospital or factory officials present, in order to allow workers to speak honestly and without fear of reprisal. Data collected from workers explicitly reflects the conditions in 158 factories employing approximately almost 90,000 workers. We believe the conditions reported by these workers are not the exception, but are the rule not only in Dongguan and Shenzhen, but also in every major manufacturing center in Southern China.

## **Demographic**

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.rieti.go.jp/en/china/03012401.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hydrocarbons-technology.com/projects/guangdong/images/Guangdong-5.gif>

Map B: Distribution of Interview Subjects by Province



Note: Figures next to province names denote number of subjects in study originally from that province. As some subjects did not disclose their provinces of origin, total does not add up to 177.

*Place of Origin.* As Map B shows, this is a thoroughly migrant workforce in the same pattern as most Reform Era urban migration. Most workers are from Central and Western China, with none coming from the Northeast, Northwest or centrally administered cities (other than Chongqing). Of the 177 workers interviewed, over one-third (68) came from Sichuan, Hunan and Henan alone, while only 14 were natives of Guangdong itself. That migrants comprise over 90% of injured workers foreshadows many of our conclusions as to the root causes of the work-injury problem and its possible solutions. As will be explained in more detail in a later section, many barriers that prevent injured workers from receiving proper workplace protections, medical care and compensation are the same as those that bar migrant workers from other government services in their new urban homes. It is as a component of the greater marginalization and exploitation of migrant workers in industrial China that the work-injury epidemic must be understood.

Table A: Study Pool by Sex and Marital Status

Age	Sex		Marital Status*	
	Male	Female	Single	Married
16-20	55	10	64	-
21-24	31	2	31	1
25-29	27	1	14	13
30-34	23	-	2	20
35-39	18	2	1	19
40-44	5	1	1	5
45-49	1	0	-	1
50-54	1	-	-	1
Total	161	16	113	60
total %	91%	9%	64%	34%

\*% do not add up to 100. Status of four subjects unavailable.

*Age, Sex and Marital Status.* The average age of workers interviewed was 25.4 years. The median age was 22. Only 9% of workers interviewed were women while an overwhelming 91% were men. This breakdown reflects the gender profile of the manufacturing sector as a whole; men dominate the heavier and more dangerous industries, while women are better represented in the light and textile industries. This is also the rule within any given factory, where men are usually assigned the heavier and more dangerous positions. As Table A demonstrates, the workforce overall is very young and single. The average and median ages for women were 23 and 20 years respectively, and 25.7 and 23 years for men, respectively. Of all workers interviewed, 34% were married, 65% were single and 1% did not respond.

## **Injury and Treatment**

*Injury Degree, Detail and Cause.* Of those determined at the time of interview (140), the average injury degree was 8.4 on the Chinese medical classification scale. The scale is a standard vertical rating system developed by the Chinese government and determined by local health professionals ranging from 10 (least serious) to 1 (most serious). Ninety-five percent of all injuries were to victims' hands or arms, with severity ranging from cuts and burns to severe nerve damage, permanent paralysis and the loss of entire digits and limbs. The hands are the primary limbs involved in most factory work and machine operation, so their prominence in this context is not surprising.

The most common injuries reported were broken or severed fingers on the dominant hand. Most workers cited industrial factors as the causes of their injuries: "machine malfunction" accounted for a third of all responses, distantly followed by "lack of training." Though this has not been confirmed statistically, CLW investigators believe that most injuries generally occur within six months of a migrant's arrival, and that training of any kind is rarely, if ever, given.

Human factors (carelessness, fatigue, overwork, etc.) accounted for another third of injuries. The second most common response for all workers was "carelessness"; however, the severity of the injuries was such that even the most careless of workers could probably not. Furthermore, since usually no training is given, it remains to be seen

whether a worker's "carelessness" can be held responsible for an injury when he was never instructed how to use a machine properly.

A third of workers could not account for the causes of their injuries. This finding is consistent with a study of hand injuries in Hong Kong, which also found that many subjects could not explain why their injuries happened or recall exactly what occurred.<sup>6</sup>

*Hospital Stays, Medical Expenses and In-Hospital Salary.* Depending on the injury, workers stayed in the hospital on average two to four weeks. The more serious injuries, however, often required hospital stays of two or three months, with one seriously injured individual requiring 182 days of rehabilitation for a head injury. The average medical bill was Y6443 (US\$794), and the median Y3500 (US\$342). In all but a few cases, factories paid the medical bills. The average bill was equivalent to two-thirds of the average worker's entire annual salary.

The majority of workers interviewed reported receiving only their base salaries while hospitalized (56%), or none at all (8%). Only a dozen reported receiving full salaries. Since all are generally subjected to compulsory overtime work well exceeding the legal maximum of 53 hours per week,<sup>7</sup> this hospital pay represents a significant cut in workers' salaries for weeks or months at a time. If an injury is serious enough that a worker cannot work, or the company will not rehire him or her, then the loss of livelihood may be permanent and the effects even more devastating.

### **Pre-Injury Income and Benefits**

*Income.* Workers' incomes (including overtime) on average were Y804 (US\$99) per month or Y9648 (US\$1188) per year, far below the average salary rate of Y25,500 (US\$3144) reported by the Shenzhen Bureau of Labour and Social Security.<sup>8</sup> Managers in factories, however, can expect to make on average Y29,000 (US\$3576) a month, or 36 times their average worker's salary.<sup>9</sup> Sixteen percent of workers polled received less than the new Dongguan minimum wage of Y574 (US\$71) per month, which went into effect this January.<sup>10</sup> However, this does not include deductions for social security and other fees, so workers' real incomes could actually be much lower. Less than half of those interviewed responded that they had any money left over from their salaries to save for healthcare, miscellaneous costs, etc.

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<sup>6</sup> P.C. Leung & T.K.Y. Ng, "A Preliminary Look in the Causative Factors of Occupational Hand Injuries in Hong Kong," *Bulletin of the Hong Kong Medical Association*, Vol. 30, 1978.

<sup>7</sup> Based on legal working hour maximums of 44 regular hours per week for four weeks, plus maximum 36 overtime hours per month, averaged over four weeks (44 hours a week x 4 weeks + 36 overtime hours per month = 212 hours per month. 212 hours per month / 4 weeks = 53 hours per week). 1994 Labor Act of the People's Republic of China, promulgated by the National People's Congress July 5, 1994. Sections 36-39. Translated by the International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/37357/64926/Chap4>.

<sup>8</sup> "2004 gongzi zhidao jia wei gongbu sheji 16 ge hangye 418 ge gongzhong gaoji laling shouru chaoguo shoushi [Shenzhen announces salary indicators for 2004]," *Nanfang ribao* [Nangang Daily], 23 August 2004. <http://www.asianlabour.org/archives/002586.php>

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Before January 1, 2005, the legal minimum wage in Dongguan was 450RMB per month.

*Insurance.* Only half of workers surveyed reported any work-injury insurance. This work-injury insurance would normally cover industrial accidents; however, employers often refuse to provide necessary documentation for filing claims or dispute that injuries were work-related. Consequently, even if a worker is insured, compensation is not assured. This is particularly true of small factories without government licenses; having broken one law, they may be less reluctant to break others.<sup>11</sup> In these factories, reports of employers insuring only a few employees and then forcing uninsured injured employees to use the names of the insured are common. This practice is not only fraudulent, but can also make it impossible for a law-abiding worker to obtain compensation after he is injured. In 2004, during the course of the study, Premier Wen Jiabao promulgated a regulation mandating universal work-injury insurance for workers in China. At the time of publication, it is still too early to gauge its effect.

### Pre-Injury Working Hours and Conditions

Table B: Gravity of Injury as Function of Hourly Work Rate

		Hours Worked per Day											Total
		7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16+	N/A	
Injury Degree	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
	5	-	-	1	1	1	2	-	2	-	-	-	7
	6	-	2	2	-	3	1	-	-	1	-	-	9
	7	-	2	4	2	1	12	2	-	-	-	1	24
	8	-	1	-	2	2	10	2	-	-	1	-	18
	9	1	6	1	4	7	10	2	1	3	-	-	35
	10	-	9	3	6	5	15	3	3	-	-	3	47
	N/A	-	8	3	7	3	10	1	1	-	-	3	36
	Total	1	28	14	22	22	61	10	7	4	1	7	177

*Work Hours.* On average, injured workers worked 11-hour days, seven days a week. Only 14% of workers interviewed, however, reported working the legal daily maximum of hours, and only thirteen workers out of all 177 reported working the legal weekly maximum for overtime. Data, however, strongly suggests a direct relationship between overwork/fatigue and work injuries. Those who worked 12 hours a day suffered the most serious and by far the greatest number of injuries, while those who worked less than 8 hours per day suffered both the fewest and least serious injuries (see Table B). Since workers generally do not work at more than one factory, work rates correlate directly to levels of fatigue. Workers who worked fewer hours were most likely less fatigued, more alert and less prone to injury, while those who worked longer hours were more fatigued, less alert, more likely to be injured, and more likely to be injured seriously. Thus, the tolerance level for work injuries appears to be 7 hours of work a day, excluding

<sup>11</sup> Li Wanwei, "To Review the Guarantee System of Occupational Disaster for Workers in the Pearl River Delta," *Victims at Work: the Analects on Occupational Safety and Health Rights of Migrant Workers*. Beijing, Social Sciences Academic Press; 2004.

one hour for lunch. That is to say, if workers have an 8 hour day (including lunch), work injuries are almost eliminated.

This observed relationship between injury and fatigue is revealing, as the most affected workers were those forced to work an illegal number of hours. The fewest injuries occurred at 8 hours/day, a legal work rate, while the most numerous and serious injuries occurred at 12 hours/day or more. Twelve-hour days (or 72-hour weeks) are not only unsafe, but also illegal and far in excess of the absolute limit stipulated in Chinese labor law (including overtime) of 53 hours per week.<sup>12</sup> The policy implications of this are not to be understated. If existing maximum hour laws were enforced, work injuries would be significantly reduced.

*Most Common Positions and Products.* The positions of workers interviewed range from the skilled to the unskilled, from technicians to carpenters to assembly line attendants. They make common consumer products including shoes, apparel, tires, office furniture and traditional Chinese medicine, as well as industrial products such as iron pipes, circuit boards and electronics. Half of workers interviewed reported that their products were exported for sale overseas, many of those goods bound for American markets.

## **Education**

*Education.* The education level of workers filling these unskilled factory jobs is generally very low. Of the 177 workers interviewed, only 27 or 15% had any education beyond China's compulsory minimum of nine years. Of those 27 workers, only two had any education beyond the high school level and only one was female. Of all workers interviewed, 49 or 27% had not completed the state minimum of nine years, including eight workers who did not finish primary school. The majority of workers polled, 57%, were middle school graduates, having received just the bare legal minimum of nine years of compulsory education.

*Knowledge of Labor Law.* It is perhaps unsurprising then that only 17% reported having any knowledge of labor law, while the rest reported having none at all. Of those workers who responded in the affirmative, almost all cited their source of information as "listening to other people." Despite or perhaps because of a general paucity of knowledge regarding labor law, 79% all of workers also responded that they needed legal assistance.

## **Post-Injury Plans**

*Workers' Plans and Compensation.* At the time of this study, only one of the 177 workers interviewed had received any compensation for his injuries. This worker had been in the hospital six months and did not expect to ever be able to return to his former job. As for the rest, the great majority of workers either did not know what they would do, or said they would try and claim compensation against their employers. Many of the least seriously injured (those with level 10 injuries) said they would return to work in

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<sup>12</sup> See footnote #4.

their factories if allowed. However, due to local hiring practices towards the disabled, it is unlikely they will be afforded the opportunity.

## **Discussion and Recommendations**

The epidemic of work-related injuries, and the failure of local business and government to address it either through prevention or adequate compensation stems from two functional dimensions: the technical and the institutional. The technical level includes the physical causes of work-related injuries, which are not unique to Southern China's manufacturing sector. The institutional problems, on the other hand, are rooted in China's unique developmental history, politics and growth. These include the absence of legal aid institutions, poor government oversight and official corruption on the local and provincial levels.

### **On the Surface: Technical Problems**

*Safety and Training.* As mentioned in the previous section, this study found the most common causes of work-related injuries to be machine malfunction, lack of training, and especially fatigue. Even when workers cited their own carelessness as the cause, the nature of the injury suggested that had the proper safety measures been in place, the mandated safety regulations been followed, the proper training provided, or simply the legal work limits respected, then the injury would not have occurred. The answer to curbing the work injury epidemic is as simple as following the existing safety regulations, adhering to work hour limits to prevent fatigue and promote alertness, and providing more extensive job training. Communities seeking to promote foreign investment through preferential business conditions could subsidize the hiring of dedicated trainers in each factory to teach correct use of equipment, safety laws and regulations, instead of compromising workers' safety by providing a "soft environment" (i.e. "flexible" government oversight and enforcement). Furthermore, since workers are increasingly finishing the compulsory nine year educational minimum, basic principles of labor rights and safety should be introduced into the national curriculum so all workers and citizens can understand the minimum level of treatment to which they are legally entitled, no matter what their profession.

*Formation of Joint Safety Committees.* A method suggested by local NGOs to promote worker safety and fight corruption on the local level is the creation of joint safety committees on the factory level. An idea that is quickly gaining popularity in labor rights circles, the committee is made up of both managers and workers elected freely by their peers. The committee would function both as a monitor and promoter of safety conditions in a factory, collecting suggestions and complaints in each department, promoting awareness of safety issues and regulations, providing occupational safety training and providing support to injured employees. The committee would make regular recommendations to management and follow-up to encourage managerial accountability. For this committee to be truly effective in both fighting corruption and promoting better working conditions it needs the participation and support of local governments, NGOs,

factory clients, management, and most importantly, workers. Furthermore, the support of the city, provincial and national governments are required in the form of more stringent regulations so that committees have more legal leverage to ensure a safe, productive and humane working environment.

### **At the Core: Institutions**

*Increased Government Reporting and Oversight.* Although the logistics of the above solutions are relatively simple, institutional barriers exist which make it difficult to enforce laws and put these safety precautions in place. One such barrier is the complete absence of reporting and enforcement mechanisms on the local and national levels. As it stands now, there are few official statistics on the prevalence of work-related injuries, and consequently, no government agencies to follow up and make sure those injuries are compensated fairly and fully. What few labor inspectors there are too few in number and easily bought by local business interests.

The National Safety Administration this July recommended the central government establish a Production Safety Statistic Index, however, it has yet to be determined if the government will create such an index or how it will address underreporting by officials and employers.<sup>13</sup> A new reporting organ could potentially be based in hospitals, and funded by the provincial and central governments to ensure hospitals are not held hostage by factories which refuse payment in order to compel underreporting. Employers that respond by not taking workers to hospitals would face criminal charges for the injuries sustained by a worker as a result.

Lastly, increased transparency in operations on the part of local businesses and government would allow local and international NGOs to oversee business operations and employee treatment. This would provide an inexpensive and reputable reporting mechanism in addition to state organs' increased vigilance and enforcement.

*Legal Aid and Access.* Another institutional barrier is the relative lack of legal aid for workers who seek compensation, and the difficulty in accessing what little help there is. The circuitous legal procedure and the large amounts of capital required to even file a work-injury claim alone prevent the great majority of migrant workers from receiving adequate compensation. Workers often settle for less because they are pressured by company officials and simply cannot afford the legal fees to pursue their cases. Yet, even if they do possess the financial means, it can take up to three years to obtain compensation. According to state-run media, if compensated at all, workers usually only receive 20,000-30,000 RMB (approx. US\$2,500-3,700).<sup>14</sup> This is unacceptable, especially as injured employees who can no longer work usually return to their homes in the interior, externalizing the costs of supporting disabled laborers onto poorer and less developed provinces.

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<sup>13</sup> XINHUANET.com, 我国应尽快将工保险引入安全生产监督管理机制 (woguo ying jinkuaijiang gongshangbaoxian yinru anquan shengchan jianduguanlijizhi) July 13, 2005, news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-07/13/content\_3216098.htm

<sup>14</sup> China News Daily (中国青年报), 珠江三角洲农民工生存状况调查 (Zhujiang sanjiaozhou nongmingong shengcun zhuangkuang diaocha), January 2, 2005.

The hospital itself is the usually the first barrier to filing a compensation claim. Workers are usually taken to small local hospitals often specializing in hand injuries and generally treating workers exclusively. Since most patients are workers, most of each hospital's treatment is paid for by local factories whom, consequently, usually have a strong relationship with the hospital's staff and management. CLW investigators found that this relationship often extended to limiting workers' access to visitors, intimidation and the denial or forgery of medical certificates required for filing work-injury claims at factories' request.

After the injury has occurred, the process for filing a claim is difficult to navigate and easily derailed at each step by uncooperative or corrupt officials. Before he can file a claim, a worker must first obtain his state identification card, a hospital certificate, a document proving employment at the factory, a copy of the factory's state business registration, a witness and an application form from the Labor Bureau. While the state-issued ID and application are usually not difficult to obtain, hospitals and factories often deny the health certificate and documents of employment, defeating a worker's compensation claim before it has even begun. From here, a government agent may come from the Work Injury Board within two months to investigate the claim. The Work Injury Board is a government entity often made up of or influenced by the same functionaries that have provided a "soft environment" to local companies, and so may also deny workers certification. If, however, a worker has the financial and personal resources to propel his claim over these first hurdles it may then be submitted to the Social Security Bureau for compensation. Unsurprisingly, this legal course is quite difficult to navigate for migrant workers who have little political or economic clout of their own. A more accessible and less expensive means by which employees can sue unsafe employers, would not only see justice more often served, but it would also create an economic incentive for all companies to improve safety conditions in order to avoid large compensation suits.

*Corruption, the Law and International Oversight.* At the base of the work-injury epidemic, however, is the same local level corruption that has plagued China since it moved as a nation to a more market-driven economy. With some notable exceptions, China has many progressive statutes on the books governing labor like the Labour Act of 1994 and the Worker Safety Law of 2002. Together these laws set average work week ceilings at 44 hours, with monthly overtime hours not to exceed 36 hours per month. They set minimum wage premiums for overtime work, guarantee at least one day off a week and give workers the right to refuse to operate machinery that violates safety regulations without risk of termination or lost wages.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, in 2003 Premier Wen Jiabao promulgated a regulation regarding work-injury insurance that requires all enterprises, both public and private, to obtain on-the-job insurance coverage for all of their employees.<sup>16</sup> These laws, however, mean little if corruption is not curbed and regulations go unenforced.

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<sup>15</sup> Labour Act of 1994, Sections 36-44, <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/WEBTEXT/37357/64926/E94CHN01.htm#Chap4> & Worker Safety Law of 2002, [http://en.ec.com.cn/pubnews/2004\\_03\\_24/200867/1004747.jsp](http://en.ec.com.cn/pubnews/2004_03_24/200867/1004747.jsp)

<sup>16</sup>Gross, Ames, "Update on HR Issues in Asia," *International Focus*, Society for Human Resource Management, 2003.

As one of China's most prominent lawyers for migrant laborers, Zhou Litai, said to the Detroit Free Press, "China has a series of laws protecting workers' rights and interests. They are probably better than in some Western countries. But they don't apply it, particularly at the local level."<sup>17</sup> The poor enforcement of these regulations is felt most acutely by the 100 million migrant workers who have flocked to urban areas over the past 20 years, but who, because of the defunct *hukou* or household registration system, have little institutional support and few legal rights compared to their native urban neighbors.

The prevalence of unlicensed factories and unregistered workers further abridge migrant workers' right to compensation. It is for this reason that international pressure and monitoring are so important. As factories make an increasing number of products for export to Western markets, Western consumers gain a greater amount of potential influence over the conditions under which those products are made. Unlike smaller factories, larger factories often produce for bigger brands and are under considerably greater scrutiny from local governments and foreign clients. Subsequently, they tend to treat their workers better and compensate them more fairly than their smaller, less conspicuous and often illegal counterparts. This compliance, however, is not a function of superior business ethics, but solely of greater overall surveillance and pressure. Conscious consumerism and international pressure by consumers, NGOs and clients have the ability to create that economic incentive that social pressure cannot. For this reason, it is a crucial part of any campaign to force employers to ensure better factories and safer workers.

## Conclusion

There are currently no official statistics documenting Chinese work-related injuries. Whether the authorities deliberately wish to shroud the issue in obscurity, or are just neglectful is unclear, however the absence of official records or statistics remains a large obstacle to improving workplace conditions. Our study has sought to document at least a few work-injury cases and provide a more accurate assessment of this problem and its solutions for the public discourse. Yet, the studies by China Labor Watch and other NGOs can only supplement what must be a government effort to monitor factory conditions and workers' rights. Without official participation there is no record and without a record there is no accountability. With this in mind China Labor Watch recommends that the following actions be taken by governments at all levels to address the growing rate of industrial injuries and safe-guard Chinese workers:

- Stricter enforcement of existing safety regulations and greater adherence to work hour limits to prevent fatigue, which we have shown is directly related to the seriousness and frequency of work injuries,
- More extensive job-specific training through dedicated in-house safety personnel and inclusion in primary school curriculum of basic workers' legal rights,

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<sup>17</sup> Tim Johnson, "Savage form of capitalism: Chinese factory workers risk limbs to hold jobs," *Detroit Free Press*, April 17, 2004

- Encouragement of the creation of joint safety committees on the factory level comprised of both managers and peer-elected employees,
- Creation of an official work-injury index and reporting organ, possibly based in hospitals, to document work-injuries and follow compensation claims,
- Creation of a public legal aid fund and system for injured workers, so that all may have the opportunity to defend their legal rights regardless of class or geographic origin,
- More transparent local government and business operations, and greater access to international and local non-profit groups to fight corruption and promote more consumer awareness of working conditions.

To eradicate this epidemic and inoculate China's industrial sector for the future, the Chinese government must act immediately and boldly. It must go beyond the State Administration of Work Safety's recommendation for a National Production Safety Statistic Index<sup>18</sup> and create a mechanism on the local and provincial levels to record cases, ensure compensation and compel local cadres to follow up. They must create a legal aid system which allows all people to pursue their legal rights regardless of income or origin. But most of all, they must move to better safe-guard workers from exploitation if they are ever to move into the community of nations as a full partner and friend of basic human rights. Without these measures, China economic rise will continue to come on exploitation of its once valored proletariat.

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<sup>18</sup> XINHUANET.com, *我国应尽快将工保险引入安全生产监督管理机制 (woguo yingjin kuaijiang gongshangbaoxian yinru anquan shengchan jianbuguanlijizhi)* July 13, 2005, [news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-07/13/content\\_3216098.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/newscenter/2005-07/13/content_3216098.htm)