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CHINESE POISON TRAIN

# Made in China, Made In A Death Trap



The Salt Lake Tribune has a special series written by a reporter who spent a year in China investigating the conditions in 25 factories. While Americans are running around concerned about the long-term effects of lead in toys, real Chinese workers are dying in deplorable working conditions as they put together our cheap gas grills and La-Z-Boy recliners so we can enjoy them at everyday low prices.

One is dying from silicosis from making Char-Broil gas stoves. One lost three fingers making goods for Restoration Hardware. One is suffering from a precursor to leukemia after painting and varnishing furniture bound for America. Others have cadmium poisoning after making batteries for Eveready and Energizer. In all cases, not even basic safety protocols or safety devices were observed. It was simply a matter of what was cheapest and most expedient.

American Imports, Chinese Deaths [Salt Lake Tribune]

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7:58 AM ON WED OCT 24 2007  
BY BEN POIKEN  
3,453 views

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## COMMENTS



BY SHANG AT 10/24/07 08:21 AM

I would like to see what the fat cats over there are banking. Because at some point you have to look at evils other than the American corporations that are sending the work over there. Something tells me that there is PLENTY of money going through those places to make the work safe for these people, but the big wigs are just as greedy over there.



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 08:28 AM

*Chinese workers are dying in deplorable working conditions ... so we can enjoy them at everyday low prices.*

Thank goodness. I finally have some official Consumerist validation for my "The Only Person to Blame for Wal-Mart is Yourself" argument.



BY SUBURBANSOCIALITE AT 10/24/07 08:36 AM

@Hambriq: Exactly the reason I no longer shop there. Voting with my dollar is my only recourse, as increased government regulation would likely make things worse.



BY CASSIFRAS AT 10/24/07 08:45 AM

sheesh - its like the industrial revolution all over again, only with Elmo dolls and poorly made daybeds.



BY MALCHIDEMONOS AT 10/24/07 08:58 AM

If their stupid enough to keep producing cheap stuff by killing themselves then that's their problem. If they keep overpopulating then there going to die of starvation rather than bad working conditions. Even though they have a limit on how many kids they can have over there they still choose to pay the fine for having more than one. Their killing themselves one way or another and if they want to go out and make cheap stuff on their death beds that's fine with me. Not my choice on how they die. The way I see it the government is doing a little population control and even though that may seem sick and disturbing... just think of what it would be like with that many people in one location. The garbage and the sewage from all those people has to be insane.



BY JESSE IN JAPAN AT 10/24/07 09:03 AM

Malch, right, because it's much more painful to starve to death than to work yourself to death producing cheap goods.  
You asshole.



BY DUALITYSHIFT AT 10/24/07 09:11 AM

@Malchidemonos:

*If their stupid enough to keep producing cheap stuff by killing themselves then that's their problem.*

Think a little harder than that. If there are deplorable working conditions, what do you think their environmental standards are? It isn't just them killing themselves, these factories pump out massive pollution, causing widespread trouble.

In the end, it's the fault of the Chinese government for allowing next to no pollution standards. It's the retail outlets' fault for using questionable manufacturing sites for their contracts. It's the fault of the consumer for buying cheaper goods. It's your fault and it's mine. There's enough blame to go around, please take a share.



BY SUBULAZ AT 10/24/07 09:18 AM

Pay attention if you are a US citizen - with a cheaper dollar it will soon start getting more expensive to manufacture, assemble, and ship those goods from China to the US. At that point, the US companies that are raping Chinese labor will have two choices: force their Chinese suppliers to even deeper depths of negligence or start looking inside the borders and "gasp" consider re-investing in our own country's workforce. The only way those companies will make the second choice is if people too whining and moaning about the outsourcing and off-shoring and use of illegal

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immigrants and learn how to work for a living again instead of waiting for a gravy train to derail in the front lawn and spread its cargo all over their bank accounts. So many people are caught up in finding an easy way to reach their goals - interest-free loans anyone?? - they overlook the fact that only a couple of generations ago it required a decade or more to save money just to buy a starter home, and those homes were about the size of today's standard two-bedroom apartment. I am tired of listening to my generation (yes, it is X) obsess over their Mc-Mansion, whine about paying their three leases on the latest gadget-laden cars (one of which tows the boat they use twice a year), gloat about buying TVs and gaming consoles and gigantic playsets for their kids, and then spend hundreds of dollars each week to eat over-priced food in chain restaurants instead of making dinner in their fancy kitchens.

WTF is wrong with this country? Answer: people have forgotten what it means to be a citizen. This story from China is an example of the by-product, and \*we\* should be ashamed of the example we are setting for them.



BY ANTEDILUVIAN AT 10/24/07 09:19 AM  
There's a similar argument to be made for buying organic produce, compared to imported conventionally-grown produce: workers are exposed to far fewer chemicals (primarily pesticides). Other countries still allow various pesticides that have been banned in the US/EU. Not very healthy for the folks in the fields.



BY CHEESYFRU AT 10/24/07 09:31 AM  
@Malchidemonos: "If their stupid enough..."  
The elementary school grammar error in your first four words is a bit ironic, given that you're calling an entire country of 1.3 billion people stupid.



BY ZEKESULASTIN AT 10/24/07 09:31 AM  
I just wonder what the low-end workers on our side of the Wal-Mart vicious cycle think about this - or if they can even afford to give a damn.



BY TINBUG AT 10/24/07 09:36 AM  
*real Chinese workers are dying in deplorable working conditions as they put together our cheap gas grills and La-Z-Boy recliners so we can enjoy them at everyday low prices.*  
But remember kiddies - if your local retailer decides to stop carrying certain Chinese imports in their store, that's "caving to xenophobia."



BY SAVVY9999 AT 10/24/07 09:50 AM  
One does not have to have a bleeding heart to also realize that all of the toxic crap that these poor workers use to make these cheap goods-- the phthalates, cadmium, aromatic benzenes, etc-- all eventually end up in our houses and landfills. It's not just a problem 'over there'. It's a problem over there that gets shipped back here and stays.



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 09:51 AM  
@TnyBug:  
Precisely. Either way, we can always find a way to blame the American. Isn't that jolly?



BY INCONSUMER AT 10/24/07 09:54 AM  
its a bad deal sure, but the last thing we need is for us (u.s.) to say or do anything. at this point, we have little room to talk, not to mention, we don't want to be the world bully, i mean world police. personally, i'm sick of acting as if we are holier than thou.



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 09:54 AM  
@savvy9999: *the phthalates, cadmium, aromatic benzenes, etc-*  
Don't forget about dilydrogen monoxide, one of the most toxic substances known to man (it's found in almost every single variety of cancerous cell, can cause asphyxiation if inhaled, overdoses cause death in nearly 100% of cases, etc. etc.). It's used on a daily basis in a huge number of Chinese factories.



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 09:56 AM  
@savvy9999: *the phthalates, cadmium, aromatic benzenes, etc-*  
Don't forget about dilydrogen monoxide, one of the most toxic substances known to man (it's found in almost every single variety of cancerous cell, can cause asphyxiation if inhaled, overdoses cause death in nearly 100% of cases, etc. etc.). It's used on a daily basis in a huge number of Chinese factories. Check out DHMO.org for more info on this.



BY SAVVY9999 AT 10/24/07 10:04 AM  
@Hambriq: you actually took the time to write that twice? Wasn't funny the first time.



BY JAYSIN AT 10/24/07 10:04 AM  
@Hambriq:  
Water? I never drink it, fish f\*sk in it.  
- W.C. Fields



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 10:09 AM  
@savvy9999:  
It's called a double post. And do you know what IS funny? You trying to rattle off a bunch of chemical names in order to sound authoritative. Just how much Dateline do you watch?



BY NO.NO.NOTORIOUS AT 10/24/07 10:21 AM  
We were dumb enough to locate most of our manufacturing facilities outside of america, and their communist government doesn't care enough about their people to set up fair labor practices.



BY LOQUACIOUSMUSIC AT 10/24/07 10:31 AM  
@no.no.notorious: Good point, Notorious (great song, BTW). Is it that we were dumb, though, or is it that we were greedy?



BY NO.NO.NOTORIOUS AT 10/24/07 10:39 AM



@loquaciousmusic: greedy, lazy...name any deadly sin and that is the USA. yippy.



BY VLADTHEPALER AT 10/24/07 10:54 AM

Of course it's sad if anyplace treats its people as mere means of production, but let's not let ourselves be too impressed with anecdotal evidence. You could probably find an American factory worker who is missing a few fingers, too. So why do we demonize China for it?



BY SAVVY9999 AT 10/24/07 11:04 AM

@Hambriq: Don't know what 'Dateline' is... but I do have degrees in both chemistry (MS) and physics (PhD). You apparently have a keyboard and a TV remote and irrelevant, unfunny water jokes to add to the discussion. Congratulations.



BY AMOEBA AT 10/24/07 11:10 AM

If it is coming from the SALT LAKE TRIBUNE, it must be good. At least it is the only news paper I can tolerate and I can read in Utah. I always wondered, The living conditions and the health risk in China. We complain about lead, but the workers work with it.



BY DUALITYSHIFT AT 10/24/07 11:13 AM

@vladthepaler:  
When an American loses a few fingers, there are procedures in place to ensure the damage is minimal (doctors and hospitals) and the healing time is less of a stress (employment insurance, company health insurance, etc.) In China, if you lose a hand, oh well. See you on Monday. If you don't show, you lose your job.



BY BBBICI AT 10/24/07 11:28 AM

Step 1: Stop buying so much stuff. Choose quality over quantity. Repair things instead of discarding them.

Step 2: Choose fresh over processed food. Grow as much of your own food as possible.

Step 3: When possible, choose a product that has been produced in your own country. Pay a small premium.

China is growing and industrializing because of Western civilizations' disgusting appetites for junk. Stop contributing to their (and India's) economy.



BY BACKSPINNER AT 10/24/07 11:44 AM

@MalchiDemons:

There

Their

They're

I'm too lazy to list their definitions but LOOK THEM UP.



BY HAMBRIQ AT 10/24/07 11:45 AM

@savvy9999:

And you apparently have an overblown sense of accomplishment, and an inability to detect sarcasm. Let me spell it out for you: the "water" joke was a jab at your self-serving appeal to our chemical-phobia. Because saying "aromatic benzenes" is like saying "carbon based methanes". Or, more appropriately, "dihydrogen monoxide". It's redundant, unnecessary, and self-serving.

Of course, your "I have a PhD!!!" outburst only confirms my suspicion that your presence in this post is more of a self-masturbatory ego boost than an attempt to lend anything of value.



BY CONSUMERIST MODERATOR - ACAMBRAS AT 10/24/07 11:59 AM

@savvy9999:

@Hambriq:

If you have something to contribute to this thread, fantastic. Otherwise, please take your pissing contest elsewhere.



BY KURTZ AT 10/24/07 12:26 PM

Where is the moderator when you need her? Stumping for votes and telling us about her celebrity crushes.



BY CLICKERTRAINER AT 10/24/07 12:26 PM

And yet, right below this article is the Morning Deals, with cheap stuff for us to buy, with most items presumably made in countries such as China....



BY MARY MARSALA WITH FRIES AT 10/24/07 12:26 PM

This is ANOTHER good reason for forcing companies that sell their products in America to adhere to American environmental, human rights, and employment laws, no matter what country they outsource their manufacturing to. Those laws exist to protect workers, and if we really believe in the values we claim to believe in (*cough cough so-called-Christians cough*), then we'd want them to apply to everyone, not just American workers.

Not to mention, the mass exodus of manufacturing from the U.S. to "cheap" countries like China would stop BEING so cheap if we made Chinese (and other) factories that want to export to America follow American (or at least International) rules. Business in America would experience a huge resurgence if corporations (American and otherwise) couldn't get around our labor, environment, and human rights laws by simply outsourcing to countries where they don't apply!

Well...it would put Wal-Mart out of business, but you'll notice the lack of tears on my cheeks over that loss...



BY MCONFOY AT 10/24/07 12:46 PM

@MalchiDemons: too bad our government isn't doing the same though.





BY MCONFOY AT 10/24/07 12:52 PM  
 @cheesyfu: actually my second grade son has better grammar.



BY CONSUMERIST MODERATOR - ACAMBRAS AT 10/24/07 12:54 PM

@Kurtz:  
 Jeez, I'm right here. Did you not see my post IMMEDIATELY PRECEDING YOURS?



BY MCONFOY AT 10/24/07 12:54 PM  
 @Hambriq: i only blame republicans



BY MCONFOY AT 10/24/07 01:00 PM  
 Going to be fun at the Olympics when no one can breath and all the world's reporters are set loose on China. I think China is going to find out what a huge mistake winning the Olympics will be. They won't be able to control the message at that point. They really don't have a clue how the rest of the industrialized world sees them.



BY TECHGLY1138 AT 10/24/07 01:08 PM

@suluaz:  
 China pegs the yuan to the dollar. It floats a little but as teh dollar falls so the yuan, making sure that it is NEVER cheaper to make things in America.



BY JIMINYCHRISTMAS AT 10/24/07 01:20 PM

@Mary Marsala with Fries: My sentiments exactly.  
 I think the state of American manufacturing would look a lot different if the Chinese had to adhere to the equivalent of our: EPA, OSHA, wage & hour laws, civil rights (e.g.: labor organizing, environmental activism), workmen's compensation, etc. Even then, our standards are relatively lax compared to what is required in the European Union.  
 It would be interesting to add up all of those costs that Chinese manufacturers frequently, um, *externalize* and see what the 'real' price would be relative to American-made goods.  
 Another thing I wonder about: With oil approaching \$100/barrel, what happens when shipping massive quantities of goods across the world becomes a less-than-negligible cost of doing business?



BY TCABEEN AT 10/24/07 02:53 PM

It makes me want to cry that this is blamed on wal-mart, and that people think boycotting one store will stop all this bad 'stuff'.  
 Your iPod proudly displays that it was designed by Apple in California, but where was it manufactured?  
 The article mentions Restoration Hardware. What country made your clothes, pots and pans, desk, tv, computer, toothbrush?  
 I don't care where you shop. If you don't read Every Label, you support China.  
 And I'm not casting stones. I support China, too. I hate it, but I don't delude myself.  
 In fact, just now, my boss delivered a halloween bag to our desks. Inside are 2 little toys, both made in China. sigh.



BY THISAINTSWEETTEA AT 10/24/07 03:00 PM  
 OMG XENOPHOBIAAAAAaaag !!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!



BY PACO AT 10/24/07 04:12 PM

@cheesyfu: I couldn't read the post. My inner editor kept tripping up.



BY TECHNODESTRUCTO AT 10/24/07 06:03 PM

@shan6:  
 How much are they banking? A lot.  
 [news.bbc.co.uk]  
 [www.forbes.com]  
 (Granted, a lot of those people are in industries which exploit the exploiters, rather than directly exploiting the workers, but still...)  
 I've only been to Shenyang, one of China's poorer major industrial centers, but I saw more large black European luxury cars than I've seen anywhere except Tokyo. Except in Tokyo they aren't rolling past crumbling factories (I was staying in a kind of slummy neighborhood...one where the well-off, like my friend with her retired army officer dad, live in gated apartment complexes set back from the main roads) and mothers begging on the street with their infants. The contrasts were pretty STARK.



BY GIBBERSOME AT 06:04 AM

dihydrogen monoxide...you mean water?  
 lol, almost got me there!



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