



COMPLICIT: FOUR CORNERS Monday May 21 2018

Complicit: the workers paying the price for our mobile phone obsession.

“There were iPhone screens and Nokia screens...I held the phone screen in my left hand, and a piece of cloth in my right hand... Wiping was the only thing I did besides eating and sleeping.” Teenage worker

Mobile phones, smartphones and tablets have revolutionised the way we communicate but the technology we are addicted to has had toxic consequences.

“I knew we worked with chemicals, but I had no idea that it’s poison.” Young worker

China produces approximately 90% of the world’s consumer electronics. The factories making the components for these electronic goods are filled with young workers. Some have been exposed to poisonous chemicals, with devastating results.

“Many co-workers developed the exact same symptoms. When I walked, it looked like I had uneven legs. It would take 10 minutes to take a two-minute walk. My legs felt too heavy to move.” Worker

This investigation, filmed secretly over four years, exposed the use of harmful chemicals in the factories producing the products many of us use. Hidden cameras captured the working conditions inside the factories churning out these products.

“It was the cleaning solution he used, which contained benzene, when he was working at the electronics factory that caused his disease.” Father of sick worker

The film charts the growing realisation amongst the workers that their illnesses stem from their work and follows their fight for compensation.

“After we discovered so many workers with leukemia...more media reports followed up and showed that these workers were chemically poisoned.” Worker activist

The landmark investigation led Apple to ban the use of benzene, a known carcinogen, and n-hexane, a chemical that damages the nervous system.

But the ban does not apply to subcontractors who make up two-thirds of Apple’s supply chain. And around 500 other chemicals are still used to produce electronics, mostly in the developing world, where there are few or no regulations to protect the workers who make them.

“Many of the workers that I’ve helped got occupational diseases due to exposure to toxic chemicals. Many are from the electronics industry. They made cell phones, computers, semiconductors etc.” Worker activist

Complicit, directed by Heather White & Lynn Zhang and presented by Sarah Ferguson, goes to air on Monday 21st May at 8.30pm. It is replayed on Tuesday



22nd May at 1.00pm and Wednesday 23rd at 11.20pm. It can also be seen on ABC NEWS channel on Saturday at 8.10pm AEST, ABC iview and at abc.net.au/4corners.

For more information:

Peri Wilson

ABC Marketing and Communications Lead, News and Current Affairs

wilson.peri@abc.net.au

0409 888 866/02 8333 2263