

Chinese Migrant Workers and Occupational Injuries

A Case Study of the Manufacturing Industry in the Pearl River Delta

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Migration and Health in China

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This paper is part of a series of outputs from the research project on [Migration and Health in China](#).

China is confronted by major challenges posed by the massive population movement over the past three decades. In 2009, approximately 230 million rural inhabitants moved temporarily or permanently to cities in search of employment and better livelihoods. Such large-scale mobility has huge implications for the pattern and transmission of diseases; for China's health care system and related policies; and for health of the Chinese population in both receiving and sending areas. The health and social issues associated with population movement on such an unprecedented scale have been inadequately addressed by public policy and largely neglected by researchers. Based on interdisciplinary research across the health, social science and policy fields, this project constitutes a major effort to fill research and policy gaps. Collectively, the papers and commentaries in this series aim to provide a comprehensive assessment of the health and public policy implications of rural to urban migration in China, to inform policy and to identify future research directions.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the causes and impacts of work-related injuries experienced by migrant workers from manufacturing enterprises in the Pearl River Delta (PRD), a major centre of foreign-invested export industry in China. The paper starts with a brief review of the occupational health and safety legislation in China. The authors analyse a database comprising more than 10,000 cases of injured migrant workers in hospitals in the PRD and in-depth interviews undertaken with injured migrant workers to explore the following questions: how do migrant workers who became victims of occupational accidents describe the conditions, causes and impacts of their work-related injuries? What does this body of knowledge tell us about the gap between the legal situation of occupational health in China and the practical situation of occupational injuries as experienced by migrant workers in the PRD? And how can this knowledge contribute to identifying areas of concern for researchers, policy makers and practitioners?

Key findings include the types, frequencies, severity and causes of migrants' work-related injuries; the current state of occupational safety and preventive measures; medical treatment and related costs (including a discussion of whether migrants tend to return home after these injuries); and health care services, health insurance and compensation for injured migrant workers. The paper concludes with recommendations for further research as well as for policy and programme interventions to prevent risk and promote protection within the broader context of institutional adaptation in the Chinese health system.

Key words: occupational health, migrant workers, work-related accidents, injury insurance, health compensation, Pearl River Delta, China

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List of Acronyms

AMRC	Asia Monitor Resource Centre
CLSY	China Labour Statistical Yearbook
DFG	German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
ILO	International Labour Organisation
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NPCSC	Standing Committee of the National People's Congress
PRD	Pearl River Delta
SAWS	State Administration of Work Safety
SC	State Council
WSC	Work Safety Commission

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