Garment Worker Safety Fatality File

GARMENT MANUFACTURER CITED FOR SAFETY HAZARDS

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Daewoosa Samoa Ltd. was cited for 28 alleged safety and health violations at its Tafuna facility.

The company ceased operations in January, and its owner – Kil-Soo Lee of South Korea – was arrested in March by the Federal Bureau of Investigation for alleged involuntary servitude and forced labor by obtaining the services of Vietnamese factory workers by threats of serious physical harm or physical restraint.

“The conditions under which these workers work were beyond comprehension,” said Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. “The owner of this factory must be held accountable for his inhumane acts and pay the consequences of his actions. The charges of both the FBI and OSHA make clear that justice will be served.”

OSHA inspection of the facility was prompted by a media referral following a disturbance between workers and management at the facility on Nov. 28, 2000.

OSHA”s inspection found numerous instances of dangerous and unsanitary working conditions.

OSHA assessed Daewoosa Samoa $30,000 in penalties for 11 alleged

serious violations for inappropriate and insufficient sanitation facilities and inadequate fire exits and lack of installed fire alarms.

The owner was also cited for failing to properly manage the temporary lodging facilities of workers by not controlling rodent and insect infestation; allowing unsanitary conditions in the kitchen and dining hall, including non-disposal of refuse; causing overcrowding in sleeping rooms; failing to provide functional fire extinguishers, and violating various electrical standards.

The company was also cited for eight alleged repeat violations stemming from three previous OSHA inspections beginning in September 1999.

Those violations address the employer”s failure to: maintain OSHA injury and illness recordkeeping logs; install railings on stairs; furnish sanitary toilet conditions; document fire extinguisher checks; and cover electrical outlets. A total of $18,500 in repeat penalties was proposed.

Until its closure in January, Daewoosa Samoa manufactuered men”s sportswear for numerous retail outlets in the United States.

Approximately 250 people worked at the factory in American Samoa, a U.S. territory approximately 2,300 miles southwest of Hawaii.