

More than 600 sickened by lead poisoning in China

June 12 2011

(AP) -- More than 600 people, including 103 children, have been sickened in China's latest case of mass lead poisoning, state media reported Sunday.

China has suffered widespread problems in recent years from heavy metal contamination, with thousands of children affected by [lead poisoning](#) in several provinces in 2009 and 2010 because they lived near metal smelters or battery factories.

The victims in the latest case were workers and their children in 25 family-run tinfoil processing workshops in Yangxunqiao town in Zhejiang province in eastern China, the official Xinhua News Agency reported.

Xinhua said tests showed that 26 adults and all 103 children have severe lead poisoning, while 494 others have moderate poisoning.

Lead is used in tinfoil processing and Xinhua said the workers and their families were constantly exposed to lead materials.

It said the workshops have suspended their operations.

Last month, 74 people were detained and production was suspended at hundreds of battery factories in the same province after dozens of people were sickened by lead and [cadmium](#) poisoning.

Local authorities are belatedly moving to curb pollution after Beijing announced plans for tighter oversight in response to reports of widespread contamination from heavy metals.

Lead poisoning can damage the nervous, muscular and reproductive systems. Children are particularly at risk.

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