

## Haunting scenes 'near iPhone factory' in China: 'Fleeing or escaping'

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Haunting videos shared on Chinese social media show piles of belongings stacked disturbingly high on city streets. Clothing and other household items can be seen floating down from empty apartment buildings, allegedly near an iPhone factory.

The footage emerged during the second week of November, [following a series of Covid-19 outbreaks at Foxconn's factories in Zhengzhou](#). The spread of the virus and reports of deteriorating living conditions led to widespread panic among workers. Video shows them allegedly climbing fences to escape the factory.

The plant produces around 70 per cent of the world's iPhones and usually employs approximately 200,000 workers. There has been pressure on the company to satisfy the hunger for consumer electronics this Christmas.



Large piles of personal belongings were filmed outside in China. Source: TikTok

The shutdowns could not have come at a worse time for Foxconn. Apple warned customers iPhone shipments could be delayed. “We are working closely with our supplier to return to normal production levels while ensuring the health and safety of every worker,” [Apple announced on November 6](#).

### Foxconn tries to lure workers into factory jobs

Associate Professor Dr Jenny Chan from Hong Kong Polytechnic University has been studying Foxconn since 2010. Her interest was prompted by reports the company had installed safety

nets around buildings following a series of employee suicides. Dr Chan now advocates for worker rights at the company's factories.

Speaking with Yahoo News Australia on Friday, she remained concerned about worker health and well-being at the Zhengzhou plant. There have been reports of food and medical supplies shortages since access to canteens and convenience stores at the factory site was restricted. It also is unclear how many Foxconn staff are infected by Covid-19, but it has been alleged that large numbers of workers have been quarantined.

Dr Chan said the dormitory administrators would be facing immense pressure to empty out abandoned rooms. [“Workers have been fleeing or escaping or refusing to work at Foxconn,](#) and therefore, they need to clear new space for those who are recruited from the villages or agencies,” she said.

Those who fled the city were forced to leave on foot due to a lack of public transport. Australian National University's Honorary Associate Professor Dr Anita Chan told Yahoo News Australia many had to walk for hours or even days and carting their luggage home was not an option due to the distance.

"Some seem to have been thrown out of windows ... some left in the streets by the workers," she said.

Dr Anita Chan compares the situation to that in Shanghai earlier this year, when there was not enough food during strict lockdowns. She adds that most Foxconn workers are not from Zhengzhou, so they are treated as migrants.

"They live in very crowded dormitories... housing eight to 10 workers in one room is normal. You can imagine there is a lot of cross-infection," she said.

Worker shortages have become so desperate that the People's Liberation Army urged retired veterans to travel to Zhengzhou to help with production.

Villagers and graduates have been offered bonuses and higher wages to work at the factory. After completing 15 days at the factory, new employees will be given a payment of 1600 yuan (\$334), and they will receive 30 yuan per hour, [according to China Daily.](#)

There are reports the company [has since hit its hiring target of 100,000 new staff.](#)

### **Massive expansion of Foxconn factory**

Foxconn and Apple did not respond to requests for comment from Yahoo News Australia.

Yahoo News Australia understands some within the Foxconn blame Zhengzhou municipal officials for the workers abandoning their jobs. They argue authorities failed to inform the public about measures to combat the virus which they believe would have assured local residents and employees. They added that employees are subject to a Covid-19 nucleic acid tests once a day.



A man carries his bag past a massive pile of belongings. Source: TikTok

While multiple social media accounts allege the buildings housed Foxconn workers, verifying who owns the buildings remains difficult. Ms Chan cannot travel to the region from Hong Kong because of Covid-19 travel restrictions, and there have been no accredited journalists reporting to Australian news outlets in mainland China since 2020.

In 2015, Foxconn had 12 building zones, with each given a letter between A and M. The site was so large that buses were used to ferry workers to the factories.



A map of dwellings at the Foxconn plant in Zhengzhou. Source: Supplied / Jenny Chan

Foxconn has expanded substantially since it began operations in 2010, and this includes the construction of new worker housing. “Specifically we are referring to the economic zone near the airport,” Dr Jenny Chan said. “Therefore some (older) buildings have been taken over and they have been provided as living spaces. Some are rental apartments are outside the direct control of Foxconn... they are (run by) property or housing management firms and they are indeed serving Foxconn in a way.”

Dr Jenny Chan said she remains concerned about ongoing issues of transparency at the site.

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