



•The late Paul Samuel

Factory Worker Dies After Honouring Management's Invitation?

•Relatives Demand Probe

By Anthony Okoro,
REPORTER, Lagos

Relatives of a former staff of Western Metal Products Company Limited (WEMPCO), Ogba, Lagos, Paul Samuel (32), have called for investigation into the circumstances surrounding his mysterious death.

Paul, it was gathered, died on Friday, October 19, 2007, few hours after visiting the Chinese firm at the request of the management in respect of his welfare package.

Daily Independent gathered that the deceased, who worked at the Wood Line Department of the company, had been having a running battle with the Chinese firm after he suffered a crush injury from industrial roller, which led to the amputation of his left hand.

Reports said the late Paul had an industrial accident on March 3, 2007, during which his left hand was completely mangled.

Daily Independent gathered that one of the machines in the Wood Line Department, which had developed fault, was under repairs that fateful day. The machine after repairs was afterward put to test without the knowledge of some workers of the department.

Paul, following an instruction from his boss to find out if the industrial roller was in order had his left hand trapped in the machine. Eyewitnesses said the hand was trapped in the roller for about an hour before it was eventually rescued. But before then all the fingers had garbled.

He was later rushed to White Chapel Hospital at Dopemu, a suburb of Lagos in Agege Local Government for treatment.

However, when his condition refused to improve, he left Lagos for Akwa Ibom State, where he was admitted at the University of Uyo Teaching Hospital for further treatment. On March 27, 2007, his troubled left hand was amputated as his condition

worsened.

Daily Independent was informed that he incurred a hospital bill totaling over N257,000 for the amputation and treatment of the hand.

According to reports, upon his return to Lagos he submitted the hospital bill to WEMPCO management as requested. The company had initially promised to pay the bill before it reneged.

Since then he had been battling with the Chinese company to secure a refund of the hospital bill as well as compensation for his deformity as he could no longer work again for the company.

The late Paul, it was learnt, demanded for N6 million compensation, but the Chinese company was willing to pay less than N150,000.

Reports said before his demise his lawyer and that of the company had been battling for months to iron out the compensation palaver, but to no avail. Family sources hinted that on the night of Wednesday, October 17, 2007, WEMPCO management invited the deceased via telephone to come to the company's premises for further negotiation.

On Thursday, October 18, 2007, he honoured the invitation and visited the Chinese firm. He later returned to his residence at No. 5, Tunji Rawaye Crescent, Haruna, Ifako, Lagos, in the evening of that Thursday.

Daily Independent, however, gathered that about 3 a.m. on Friday, October 19, 2007, Paul started screaming on his bed and within an hour blood started oozing from his nostrils and eyes. He died instantly even before he could be taken to a nearby hospital that early morning.

"Before he left for WEMPCO that Thursday morning he was in perfect health. He was hale and hearty. There was no problem. He returned home in the evening and did not complain of any problem. At night he stayed and played with everybody outside until

we retired to bed. But about 3 a.m. he began to scream and some whitish substance came out from his mouth while blood came out from his nostrils and eyes. He died instantly before any help could be rendered to him," the deceased wife told *Daily Independent*.

Family relations suspected that Paul might have been poisoned during the day.

"How could it be that somebody who was in very good health condition just suddenly died in that manner?" Paul's sister queried.

She added: "We suspect poisoning. He might have been poisoned that fateful Thursday afternoon while he was away from home. What we want is a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding his death."

However, very reliable family sources hinted that the matter had since been reported to the police at Area 6 Police Command in Ogba, Lagos. The police, it was learnt, have already commenced investigation into the controversial death of the factory worker.

Daily Independent also gathered that the man's corpse had been taken to his hometown in Akwa Ibom State for burial.

The management of WEMPCO, however, has erected a massive wall of silence over the matter.

Efforts to get any of the management staff of the Chinese company to speak on the issue had for the past weeks proved abortive as *Daily Independent* was always told that the right person to comment was not on seat.

Even several telephone calls to this effect were rebuffed by some of the management staff.

However, more than three months after the tragedy, Paul's mysterious death has continued to generate controversy in the entire Ifako area and neighbourhood as well as WEMPCO, where he had worked for over 10 years.