

Irresponsible companies shamed

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The companies with the worst reputation and the most to do to clean it up have been named

The top ten most environmentally and socially controversial companies of the first half of 2008 have been named and shamed.

Rankings were based on a report by RepRisk which said the companies had been consistently criticized for issues including human rights abuses, environmental violations, corruption and bribery, and breaches of labour, health and safety standards.

The companies were Samsung, Total, Wal-Mart, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), Shell, ExxonMobil, Citigroup, Nestlé, ArcelorMittal, and Chevron.

The three issues the companies were criticised for most were human rights abuses, impacts on communities and impacts on ecosystems.

The calculations were based on the content and reach of news stories about the companies.

Samsung has been involved in a large scale corruption scandal in South Korea. Former Samsung Chairman Lee Kun-hee was fined \$110m for tax evasion and accused of breach of trust in the transfer of group control to his only son. The investigation involved the arrest of several other executives. As a sponsor of the Olympics it has also been accused of silence on Chinese human rights abuses.

Total has been criticised for gas flaring in Nigeria, human rights violations in Burma and a worsening environmental record. One of the worst environmental disasters to ever happen at sea involved the French oil company's aging tanker Erika. When it sank off the coast of France it spilt 30,000 tonnes of oil into the sea. The company was eventually fined 375,000 euros and ordered to pay another 200m euros in compensation. Total has recently begun investing in carbon capture projects to try and clean up its image.

Wal-Mart has been repeatedly criticised for its labour standards and supply chain issues. Although it has made efforts to stave off union-led criticism over its healthcare benefits package, and green its supply chain.

RepRisk said the report is a good indicator of a company's exposure to controversial issues.

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