

Chinese Workers Caught Using Paper Face Masks to Bypass Facial Recognition

A surveillance camera caught the scheme on video: employees at a local government office in eastern China holding up printed photographs of their coworkers' faces to fool a facial recognition system designed to track attendance.

The workers at a neighborhood committee in Wenzhou City, Zhejiang province, had discovered a low-tech workaround to a high-tech problem. By printing colleagues' faces on paper and fashioning them into masks, one person could clock in for multiple absent workers.



They printed the faces of their colleagues on paper and made them into masks. By wearing the face coverings, one person could check in for work for multiple people.

The malpractice was recorded by a surveillance camera installed above the check-in machine.

It is unknown how many members of staff were involved or how the whistle-blower obtained the surveillance footage.



The quality of face masks available today can be remarkably realistic and deceptive, and they are readily accessible at reasonable prices.
Photo: 163.com

The Fraud Reported By A Concerned Citizen

A resident named Li reported the scheme to authorities in October after somehow obtaining the surveillance footage. The video showed a committee secretary, also surnamed Li, leading the group in the deception.

The revelation sparked outrage on Chinese social media.

"This is corruption. They should all be fired and even legally punished," one commenter wrote. "There are so many people who struggle to find a job."

Others pointed to the stark contrast between the government workers' apparent light schedules and the grueling hours faced by many Chinese employees. The

country's tech industry became infamous for its "996" culture, which refers to working from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., six days a week.

Neighborhood committees represent the lowest level of urban governance in China. Staff members are not technically civil servants and receive allowances rather than government salaries. Their duties typically include visiting homes and handling residents' concerns.

Mask Are Cheap And They Work At Bypassing Facial Recognition

The vulnerability in facial recognition systems is not new. A 2022 investigation by Legal Daily found that custom-printed face masks costing between 10 and 40 yuan, roughly \$1.40 to \$5.60, could fool certain machines. Lower-resolution systems proved particularly susceptible.

Government authorities have promised to respond to the complaint by December 31. It remains unclear how many workers participated in the scheme or what penalties they might face.



The incriminating images were captured by a surveillance camera positioned above the facial recognition machine. Photo: 163.com