



The Bangladesh Accord Brings Health & Safety to South Asia

Union representatives attend the two day occupational safety and health training sessions.

Garrett Brown, coordinator of the Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network and COEH Advisory Committee member, presented an update on the Bangladesh Accord for Fire and Building Safety on March 31, 2015, at the UC Berkeley Center for Latin American Studies.

The Accord is a legally binding agreement between 190 clothing brands and two international trade unions and their local Bangladeshi affiliates that addresses health and safety hazards in Bangladesh's garment industry. It began after a series of fatal disasters, most notably, the Rana Plaza building collapse on the morning of April 24, 2013, which killed 1,100 workers and disabled hundreds more. Brands pay a fee to participate in the Accord, supplying crucial funds to improve factory working conditions in Bangladesh.

The Accord contracted independent, international health and safety professionals to conduct initial inspections of 1,800 Bangladesh garment factories to review fire, electrical, and building safety. It also established a staff of Bangladeshi engineers to do follow-up inspections to verify that corrections have been made. Brands are legally responsible to pay for mandatory repairs if factory owners are unable to pay.

Funded by the Accord, LOHP Program Coordinator **Robin Dewey** and Valeria Velazquez (formerly of LOHP) went to Bangladesh with Brown in October, 2014, to provide two occupational safety and health training sessions. The first was a two-day training course conducted for 30 representatives of the Industrial Bangladesh Council (IBC) unions. The second was a half-day training course conducted for the Accord's 12 case handlers and seven engineers.



A worker is designated as a fire fighter in the event of a fire.

The goal of the week-long trip was to increase the occupational safety and health knowledge and skills of the union members, the Accord's complaint handlers who receive worker complaints, and the engineers inspecting the garment industry. LOHP also provided a number of fact sheets and other resources on occupational safety and health that were translated into Bangla.

“The experience in Dhaka was moving for us and eye opening. I am sure we learned at least as much - if not more - from our trainees as they did from us,” added Dewey. “We are hoping to continue our partnership with the Accord and others we met in Bangladesh to help bring about much needed, positive health and safety changes in the ready-made garment industry.”

The United Kingdom-based Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) invited Brown to participate in a Parliamentary conference in London on June 29, 2015. Conference attendees analyzed the fashion industry's global supply chains and identified how to improve working conditions in the industry.

Watch Garrett Brown at AIHce 2015 IGNITE with "Keeping Bangladesh Garment Workers Alive, Safe and Sound."

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