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# The PUMP HANDLE

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## [Latest data on working conditions in global supply chains, September 2017 edition](#)



Posted by [garrettbrown](#) on September 21, 2017

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The whole world is one global supply chain. Brand name companies like Nike, Apple, Hasbro, and dozens of apparel companies do not actually make the consumer products they sell. Instead they hire contract manufacturers in the developing world to produce their goods, and these contractors have sub-contractors, and sub-sub-contractors, all the way down to industrial homework in workers' homes. Global supply chains start with processing the products' raw materials, manufacturing parts and the finished product, and then transportation to the consumer.

How can a conscientious consumer or occupational health professional keep track of working conditions and workers' rights in global supply chains? There is a comprehensive "one stop" way, and then multi-stop methods for the more ambitious.

For one-stop shopping, sign up for weekly notifications from the UK's "[Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#)". The staff of this non-profit organization in London scours the internet every day for the latest reports from companies, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on all aspects of global business. Their concise weekly update provides the headlines for what has been released that week, and also the response of the corporations whose operations are the subject of the reports.

Not all the companies respond to the [Resource Centre's](#) invitation to comment, but the most publicity-conscious corporations often do, providing a

richer understanding of impact of global supply chains and the varied efforts to improve working conditions.

In general, there are four sources of information about working conditions and the efforts to implement corrective actions in these supply chains: news media reports; factory reports from NGOs, factory reports from “multi-stakeholder initiatives” (MSIs); and reports from the corporate social responsibility (CSR) departments of the transnational corporations themselves.

I have [assembled a selection](#) of the key reports and articles from these four sources for the period of June to September 2017. Some of my favorites this quarter are:

- The International Labor Organization’s [report](#) on the 40+ million people caught in modern slavery;
- A Fordham University law professor’s [critique](#) of corporate social responsibility;
- The *Guardian* and *Washington Post* articles on illegal and abusive conditions in Ivanka Trump’s shoe factories in China ([here](#), [here](#)); and
- The Baptist World Aid (Australia) [computer simulation](#) game on “who makes my clothes?”

A more ambitious, and time-consuming, way to stay informed is to sign up for the weekly or monthly notices from the following [types of organizations](#):

- Labor rights organizations, such as the [Clean Clothes Campaign](#) and [Good Electronics](#)
- Multi-stakeholder initiatives, such as the [Ethical Trading Initiative](#) and [Fashion Revolution](#)
- Corporate social responsibility organizations and industry associations, such as [Electronics Industry Citizen Coalition](#)

If one has an interest in supply chains that involve a particular area of the world, then [these organizations’ web sites](#) can be visited regularly for news from Asia, Africa and the Americas.

If one has a particular industry in mind then [these organizations’ web sites](#) can be followed, including apparel, electronics and toys, although some these organizations focus more than just one industry’s supply chain.

Dozens of labor, human rights, and environmental groups are monitoring and investigating global supply chains. Every week they issue detailed and first-hand reports from the factory floors and communities that make up global supply chains. They want consumers and advocates to have this information. They want this information to inform decision making and public policy. They want it to influence the reputation of transnational corporations. They want it to improve the lives of millions of workers, their families and communities around the world.

So dive in! Use the knowledge to make a difference!

*Garrett Brown is a certified industrial hygienist who worked for Cal/OSHA for 20 years as a field Compliance Safety and Health Officer and then served as Special Assistant to the Chief of the Division before retiring in 2014. He has also been the volunteer Coordinator of the Maquiladora Health & Safety Support Network since 1993 and has coordinated projects in Bangladesh, Central America, China, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Mexico and Vietnam.*

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##### [Global supply chains still full of sweatshops](#)

Global supply chains continue to be riddled with sweatshop factories where workers’ rights and their safety are put at risk daily. There are multiple sources of information that report on these conditions, but an easy way to keep on top the latest reports and In "Labor Rights"

##### [Keeping track of working conditions and workers’ rights in global supply chains](#)

With new reports on working conditions in global supply chains coming out every week from the news media and non-governmental organizations – how is possible to keep track of the most important developments in health and safety and other worker In "Global Supply Chain"

##### [Free on-line course on “decent work in global supply chains” offered by the Global Labour University](#)

A free, two-month course on global supply chains is being offered on-line by the Global Labour University starting on January 12, 2017. The course is being taught in English by Penn State University Professor Mark Anner, one the leading labor-oriented In "Global Supply Chain"

Keywords: [Business & Human Rights Resource Centre](#), [corporate social responsibility](#), [Global supply chain](#)

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