

Improving Safety in Bangladesh Garment Factories

On April 24, 2013, the Rana Plaza building collapsed, killing 1,134 garment workers and injuring 2,500 more. In the wake of the tragedy, international media attention focused on the Western apparel brands and retailers sourcing from Bangladesh and the need for dramatic reforms in the way these companies address workplace safety in their overseas supply chains.

Founded three weeks after the Rana Plaza disaster, the Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety has made factories safer for more than two-and-a-half million garment workers. The improvements in structural, fire, and electrical safety accomplished under the Accord have helped avert further factory fires and building collapses in an industry long plagued by grossly unsafe working conditions. In the past four years, no Accord-covered factory with an active or completed action plan has seen a workplace fatality due to fire, electrical, or structural hazards. These accomplishments are all the more impressive considering that the Accord is the first binding supply chain agreement ever implemented in global supply chains.



Presenter: Brad Loewen, P.Eng.

Brad recently returned from Bangladesh where he was the Chief Safety Inspector of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety. The Accord is an independent agreement designed to make garment factories in Bangladesh safe. It includes independent safety inspections at factories and public reporting of the results of these inspections. There are approximately 1500 factories on the Accord list. Brad has a degree in Fire Protection Engineering from the University of Maryland. He has over 30 years' experience as a fire protection engineer. He served as a code official for the City of Winnipeg, Manitoba Office of the Fire Commissioner, and the Canadian Federal Fire Commissioners Office.

He continues to consult for the Bangladesh Accord and the Red River Planning District.