



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

## Subsidizing Sweatshops II

### Factsheet for Austin, Texas

April 15, 2009-- *Subsidizing Sweatshops II* tracks developments in four factories covered in the *Subsidizing Sweatshops I* (July 2008) and adds four additional factory case studies. These eight factories are located in China, Honduras, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and United States and produce for nine major uniform brands – Armor Holdings / BAE, Cintas Corporation, Eagle Industries, Elbeco, Fechheimer Brothers Company, Lion Apparel, Propper International, Rocky Brands, and Williamson-Dickie Manufacturing.

*Subsidizing Sweatshops II* documents severe violations of labor law and human rights in nearly all factories investigated. In light of these findings, SweatFree Communities asks companies to improve conditions in the facilities and assess the impact of their prices, delivery schedules, and supply chain relationships on factories' ability to comply with codes of conduct and labor rights standards. In addition, SweatFree Communities urges governments to maintain contracts with companies working to remedy violations and to join the Sweatfree Purchasing Consortium.

Below are summaries of labor conditions documented in the report at factories that provide products to brands that supply the City of Austin. The full report, including quotes from workers and detailed recommendations for each case, is available at [www.sweatfree.org/subsidizing](http://www.sweatfree.org/subsidizing).

### **Brands: Fechheimer and Cintas**

**Factory investigated: Alamode** (Siguatepeque, Honduras)

**Vendor:** Miller Uniforms & Emblems Inc.

**Products & contracts:** Navy blazers, fire-retardant trousers, fire-retardant shirts

93001000355 (7/12/2005), 744F1000852 (4/19/2005), 744F1000830 (10/7/2004), 744F1000865 (10/18/2005), 744F1002287 (11/3/2004), 744F1002327 (1/20/2005), 744F1002347 (2/18/2005), 744F1002401 (5/11/2005), 744F1002259 (10/7/2004), 744F1002442 (8/24/2005), 744F1002433 (7/12/2005), 744F1002452 (8/24/2005), 744F1002380 (4/15/2005). Contract information is from a spreadsheet supplied by the City of Austin.

Despite some improvements since July 2008, these issues remain:

- **Health and safety** measures need to be improved; **verbal harassment** remains a problem; and workers still feel **pressure to work overtime** hours that should be voluntary.

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- Strong evidence that Alamode has required workers to undergo **annual pregnancy tests** and failed to acknowledge this worker rights violation.

**Brand: Dickies**

**Factory investigated: Confecciones Mazara** (Tehuacán, Mexico)

**Vendor:** The Uniform Place

**Product & contract:** Dickies Uniform Pants UNI7069970 (10/31/2005). Contract information is from a spreadsheet supplied by the City of Austin.

- **Unlawful discrimination against union supporters in hiring decisions**, otherwise known as ‘blacklisting’. A “List of Workers Not Recommended for Hire” used by the company to deny employment to workers contains 551 names, most of whom are members of the September 19 Garment Workers Union or have been active in protest campaigns supported by the Human and Labor Rights Commission of the Tehuacán Valley.

**Brand: Dickies**

**Factory investigated: Dickies de Honduras** (Choloma, Honduras)

**Vendor:** The Uniform Place

**Product & contract:** Dickies Uniform Pants UNI7069970 (10/31/2005). Contract information is from a spreadsheet supplied by the City of Austin.

- **Fifty-eight workers fired**, supposedly to reduce cost. But they were **all union supporters**. Were they fired because they support the union?
- **Poverty wages**. The base wage pays at best one-half the cost of basic necessities for a family of four.
- **Exhausting work schedules**. The “4 x 4” schedule, from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm four days a week, amounts to 11 hours a day, and often 12 hours a day when workers fail to meet excessive production goals and must work late to catch up.

Note: Currently SweatFree Communities does not have information as to whether these particular factories are supplying the City of Austin. However, the City has recent contracts with vendors that supply products made by the brands named above. These brands source from the factories documented here, among others.