



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

Subsidizing Sweatshops II

Factsheet for Massachusetts

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 manufacture products for brands that supply approved Massachusetts apparel vendors. The full report, including quotes from workers and detailed recommendations for each case, is available at www.sweatfree.org/subsidizing.

Brands: Lion Apparel and Fechheimer

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Fechheimer brand: Doughboy Police and Fire Supply and Worcester County Police Equipment Inc.

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Lion Apparel brand: Doughboy Police and Fire Supply and Raphael's. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Alamode (Siguatopeque, Honduras)

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

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Brand: Dickies

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Dickies brand: Aramark Uniform, Doughboy Police and Fire Supply, Raphaels, Worcester County Police Equipment, Inc., Darter Specialties, Inc. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Confecciones Mazara (Tehuacán, Mexico)

- **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

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Dickies brand: Aramark Uniform, Doughboy Police and Fire Supply, Raphael’s, Worcester County Police Equipment, Inc., Darter Specialties, Inc. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Dickies de Honduras (Choloma, Honduras)

- **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.

Brand: Propper International

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Propper brand: Andrea’s Police Supply, Worcester County Police Equipment, Inc., Doughboy Police and Fire Supply. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Suprema Manufacturing (San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic)

- **Poverty wages**. The base wage only pays one-quarter the cost of basic necessities for a family of three.
- **Excessive production quotas**. Workers work through breaks, refrain from going to the bathroom, and come to work sick to meet production goals and earn sorely needed production bonuses.
- **Unhealthy work environment**. Workers are concerned that suffocating heat in the summer and air thick with fabric dust is detrimental to their health.
- **No voice on the job**. Workers interviewed were afraid that complaining too much or joining the union would get them fired. One worker was fired shortly after participating in our interview and believes that her firing was an illegal action of retaliation because of her support for the union.

Brand: Eagle Industries (subsidiary of Alliant Techsystems, Inc.)

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Eagle brand: Andrea's Aramark Uniform, Razz-m-tazz Promotions LLC. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Eagle (New Bedford, Massachusetts)

- **Serious health and safety issues**, include smoke and foul smells causing blurry vision and respiration problems; forklifts operated by untrained drivers dangerously close to work stations; suffocating heat in summer causing workers to faint.
- **Intimidation, discrimination of union supporters.** "They are always watching you."
- **Pressure to limit bathroom visits.** "They are always watching you, how many times you go to the bathroom, measuring everyone's time, making us nervous."
- **Workers are not allowed to talk at work stations.** "If you speak with the person next to you, they give you a warning."
- **No paid sick leave. No affordable health insurance.**

Brand: Rocky Brands

MA approved apparel vendors that offer Rocky products: Andrea's Police Supply, Doughboy Police and Fire Supply, Raphael's. <http://www.comm-pass.com/>

Factory investigated: Genfort Shoes (Zhongshan City, Guangdong Province, China)

- **Child labor.** Many workers testify that children as young as 14-15 years old work the same hours as adult workers and are instructed to hide when customers inspect the factory.
- **No rest days.** Sometimes there are no days off for an entire month during peak production periods. The law requires at least one rest day per week.
- **Excessive mandatory overtime.** Workers report as many as 100 overtime hours per month—far in excess of the 36 hour legal limit.
- **Inadequate compensation for weekend work.** Pay slips show workers are paid at time and a half rather than the legally mandated double hourly rate for daytime work on weekends.
- **Crowded dorms.** Workers live 12 people to a room of only 18 square meters (less than 200 square feet) with 10 cold showers for a hallway with rooms housing 264 workers.
- **Pollution.** Workers describe the factory as discharging effluent directly into the river adjacent to the factory. The water is black and foul smelling.

Note: Currently SweatFree Communities does not have information as to whether these particular factories are supplying the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. However, the Commonwealth's approved vendors source from the brands investigated here.