



A Network for Local Action Against Sweatshops

## Subsidizing Sweatshops II

### Factsheet for Milwaukee

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 Milwaukee. 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**

Vendor: Goldfish Uniforms, Contract 2000 Rebid#1 for parking checker uniforms on 11/28/2007. Goldfish does not cite the manufacturer location for the Fechheimer factory. <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/rebid2000a.pdf>

### **Factory investigated: Alamode (Siguatpeque, 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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### **Brands: Lion Apparel**

Vendor: 5 Alarm Fire & Safety LLC, Contract 2091 for firefighter coats, pants, and helmets on 6/9/2008. 5 Alarm Fire & Safety LLC cites W. Liberty, Kentucky as the manufacturer location. <http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/rebid2000a.pdf>

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### **Brand: Dickies**

Vendor: Goldfish Uniforms, Contract REQ7637 for work clothes for the Fire Department on 9/17/2007. Goldfish Uniforms appears to inaccurately cite the location of Dickies company headquarters as the manufacturing location on this affidavit:

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/7637e.pdf>

**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.

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**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: Armor Holdings** (subsidiary of BAE)

*Vendor:* In BID/RFP 1956 on 6/6/2007, Streicher's Police Equipment claims that a facility in Jacksonville, Florida is manufacturing Armor Holdings brand tactical body armor.

([http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/Bid\\_1956.pdf](http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/Bid_1956.pdf)). In BID/RFP 1826 on 8/7/2006, Gall's Inc claims that a facility in Temecula, California, is manufacturing Armor Holdings brand tactical body armor (<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/apperal.affidavit.1826.pdf>).

**Factory investigated: Safariland** (Tijuana, Mexico)

- **Unpaid mandatory overtime.** 16 workers reported mandatory day-shift overtime of 2.5 hours daily for which they were not paid the overtime rate of pay; 3 workers reported mandatory night-shift overtime of 4.5 hours nightly for which they were not paid the overtime rate pay.
- Most workers interviewed worked with either **no formal work contracts or extended temporary work contracts.**
- **Mandatory pregnancy tests.** Women testified being forced to submit a pregnancy test in order to be hired. Those pregnant would not be hired.
- **Pressure and intimidation.** Many workers reported supervisors pressuring them to work faster, yelling at them, and sometimes sitting beside them for extended periods and harassing them if they did not attain production quotas.
- **Dangerous conditions.** Many workers reported accidents that resulted in puncturing and even losing fingers. Most workers interviewed also expressed concern regarding dangerous substances including Resistol glue.

**Brand: Elbeco**

*Vendor:* Goldfish Uniforms, Contract 2000 Rebid#1 for parking checker uniforms on 11/28/2007. Goldfish does not cite the manufacturer location for the Elbeco factory.

<http://www.ci.mil.wi.us/ImageLibrary/Groups/doaPurchasing/ApparelAffidavitBids/rebid2000a.pdf>

**Factory investigated: Elbeco's City Shirt Company** (Frackville, Pennsylvania)

City Shirt Company is a unionized workplace and the only factory in this report with an effective functioning union, which helps establish decent wages and benefits for workers through collective bargaining with the company. The union also makes a more intangible difference in workers' lives by giving them a seat at the table with the company and affording them a sense of ownership and respect. These are our recommendations for Elbeco:

- Prioritize continued production in unionized facilities with good wages and decent working conditions.
- Work proactively to ensure good working conditions in the company's contract facilities. Assess the impact of Elbeco's purchasing practices on working conditions in contract facilities and eliminate negative practices while enhancing positive practices.