Garment Worker Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

Common causes of injuries for textile and garment workers

Prolonged standing – When workers must stand for lengthy periods on concrete or similarly hard surfaces, they can develop swollen or painful feet or legs, plantar fasciitis (inflammation of the connective tissue that goes from the heel to the toe, supporting the arch), stretched Achilles tendon (tendinitis), heel spurs, varicose veins, knee problems, lower back pain and neck and shoulder stiffness.

Overexertion – Bending, stretching to reach, repeatedly grasping, lifting, pulling and pushing can cause sudden trauma or cumulative strain, sprains, and tearing injuries to muscles, tendons, ligaments and other soft tissue. Carpal tunnel syndrome is a common overexertion injury caused by the type of repetitive tasks found in garment manufacturing work.

Contact with machinery – Garment workers risk having their fingers, hands or arms stuck in machinery. This may lead to serious crushing and tearing injuries, including loss of body parts, bruises, cuts and/or burns.

Exposure to fibers and dust – Workers should be issued masks to guard against inhaling fibers. Inhaling dust from synthetic fibers or natural fibers like cotton and wool can cause workers to develop acute and chronic damage to their respiratory (breathing) function.

Exposure to noise – Prolonged exposure to noise at high decibels in a textile mill can cause irreversible hearing damage. Again, protective gear should be available to prevent loss of hearing among textile workers.

STATS

Los Angeles houses the largest cut and sew apparel base in the U.S. and is the center of the country’s garment manufacturing industry. A new report expressed by garment workers and worker advocates and provides insights into the health, safety and environmental conditions of this sector found that:

- 82 % of garment workers said they never received any health or safety training.
- 72 % said their workplaces were excessively dusty.
- 60 % said poor ventilation led to excessive heat and dust accumulation that often made working and breathing difficult.
- 49 % said no first aid kits were available onsite.
- 47 % said restrooms were soiled and not maintained.
- 42 % said exits and doors were regularly blocked.
- 42 % said they had seen rats and mice in the factories.
- 33 % reported they were not allowed to take a break in the course of their workday.
- 26 % witnessed or experienced verbal or physical abuse