

To: Accord Signatory Brands
From: Ineke Zeldenrust and Scott Nova
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Re: Accord Brief - Fire Kills 52 in Bangladesh

There was a gruesome mass fatality fire in Bangladesh on Thursday, as you may know. At least 52 workers are dead. Many are burned beyond recognition and cannot even be identified for their families. Some workers leapt to their deaths from the top floors of the factory. The similarities to the 2012 Tazreen Fashions catastrophe are obvious and deeply disturbing.

This disaster is highly relevant to the apparel sector. The factory, which processes food, is owned by a company that also makes apparel. The factory is located in Narayanganj, amidst hundreds of garment facilities. The obvious absence of viable fire exits, almost surely the cause of so many deaths, is a hazard that is found in a vast number of production facilities in Bangladesh that are not covered by the Accord – from food processing factories, to chemical factories, to apparel factories.

It is vital to understand that these deadly safety hazards are also still found in hundreds of Accord-covered factories, where safety renovations are incomplete and where foot-dragging has worsened over the last year. Thanks to the Accord, many factories are now safe, but not all of them.

If there is any Accord signatory brand that still does not recognize why a binding, enforceable successor agreement is essential to the safety of Bangladesh's three million garment workers, yesterday's horror in Narayanganj demonstrates with terrible clarity why this is so.

If there is no new enforceable agreement, and if your brand is among those that helps produce that outcome, then your brand will bear responsibility for the mass fatality disasters that will inevitably occur, in the years ahead, in factories previously covered by the Accord. Thursday's tragedy provides a heart-rending preview of the human devastation the Accord's dissolution would yield.

If your brand is supporting, and is committed to signing, a successor agreement that maintains the life-saving Accord model, we applaud you.

If not, you are playing with fire.