



For Immediate Release

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ASSE, CENTER FOR SAFETY & HEALTH SUSTAINABILITY URGE CORPORATIONS TO IMPROVE SUPPLY CHAIN SAFETY MANAGEMENT & PROTECT VULNERABLE WORKERS

DES PLAINES, IL (November 29, 2012) – With workplace tragedies such as the recent factory fires in Bangladesh killing more than 100 people last weekend and in Pakistan killing more than 300 workers in September, the [American Society of Safety Engineers](#) (ASSE) and the [Center for Safety and Health Sustainability](#) (the Center) urge corporations to implement effective safety management programs and practices in their [supply chains](#) to help prevent these disasters from happening.

[Thomas Cecich, CSP, CIH](#), ASSE vice president for professional affairs and chair of the Center board said, “any organization wishing to proclaim itself as ‘sustainable’ must have a safety management system in place to protect its workers, and in a similar manner any ‘sustainable’ organization using suppliers from underdeveloped and developing nations must also require those suppliers to protect the safety and health of their employees.”

The Center, which represents more than 100,000 occupational safety, health and environmental professionals located worldwide, notes that despite the global safety community’s best efforts to prevent workplace injuries, illness, and fatalities since the [Triangle Shirtwaist Factory](#) fire killed 146 workers in New York City over a 100 years ago, many people around the world continue to work in unacceptably unsafe conditions.

Cecich explains that supply chain workers in developing nations tend to be particularly vulnerable because they face a number of workplace challenges less commonly seen in the developed world.

“Management systems for safety may be weak or nonexistent and workers tend to lack training and supervision. They often lack basic knowledge and tools required to be proactive about their own safety. Even the most basic safety and health measures and investments are frequently bypassed. Published reports of the recent tragic fires in Pakistan and Bangladesh say fundamental fire safety precautions, such as accessible exits, were lacking,” Cecich said.

One of the Center’s goals is to influence organizations to adopt best practices with regard to safety and health sustainability, which is defined as an organization’s “responsibility to ensure that the protection of human life and the safety, health and well-being of workers, customers and neighboring communities are a primary consideration in any business endeavor.”

The Center will soon release a report titled “*Current Practices in Occupational Health and Safety Sustainability Reporting*” addressing the shortcomings in occupational safety and health-related reporting among 100 global corporations otherwise deemed the most sustainable in the world. Among the many findings of the report is underreporting of metrics related to worker safety in the supply chain.

“It’s not enough to condemn local factory owners for these conditions and to expect long term change,” Cecich noted. “The corporations that source supply chain products, as well as their stakeholders, have tremendous power to influence the conditions in which supply chain workers operate. The sustainability movement, long oriented predominantly toward influencing corporate decisions with regard to the environment, has developed frameworks by which corporations can compile and report on performance criteria.

“We have suggested key indicators to be included in sustainability reporting such as promoting the use of occupational safety and health management systems, extending coverage to temporary or fixed duration contract workers, and increasing focus on workers for suppliers in the developing world,” Cecich said. “Addressing these issues will pave the way

for more meaningful reporting and needed changes when it comes to protecting human life and the safety, health and well-being of workers, customers, and neighboring communities.”

Founded in 1911, the Des Plaines, IL-based ASSE is the oldest professional safety society. Its more than 34,000 occupational safety, health and environmental (SH&E) professional members are committed to protecting people, property and the environment. For more information on the Center and to request a copy of the new report go to www.centershhs.org or contact customerservice@asse.org. Go to <http://www.asse.org/newsroom/supply-chain.php> for supply chain safety information.