

# Poll Results: Companies Should Set Safety Standards for Suppliers



Ensuring that your company and its contractors comply with the OHS laws and adequately protect workers is a daunting enough task. So it's no surprise that many companies don't give a second thought to suppliers and whether they're compliant and protecting their workers.

But if your suppliers have subpar safety records, they can reflect poorly on your company—even if your company's safety performance is stellar.

So we recently asked if companies should set safety standards for their suppliers and conduct audits/inspections to ensure compliance. The vast majority—72%—said yes. Another 20% said that it depends on the relationship between the company and supplier, while 8% said no.

Here are Model Supplier OHS Standards that you can adapt and incorporate into your agreements with suppliers.

Walmart is taking this approach after fires at two Bangladesh factories that made clothing for them revealed horrible safety conditions for workers. According to the corporate website, the company is taking the following steps to address fire safety:

- **Comprehensive Audit Program:** This program is designed to identify risks and provide information that can help factories take comprehensive preventative measures to prevent fires. It claims that factories are audited regularly to verify complying with fire safety standards, such as by conducting regular fire drills, ensuring adequate number of exit routes and requiring fire safety training for all levels of factory management. Walmart says it ends relationships with suppliers that aren't compliant. (But there appear to be holes in these rules.)
- **Fire Safety Training Programs:** Walmart says that it's working across the apparel industry to improve fire safety education in Bangladesh and has collaborated with 18 other brands to create a training program to increase fire safety awareness among our suppliers and their workers in garment factories.
- **Ongoing Stakeholder Engagement:** Walmart claims to be actively working with a variety of stakeholders, such as the Bangladesh Manufacturers and

Exporters Association, to raise awareness of fire safety and establish best practices for fire prevention.

But actions may speak louder than words. Despite the above programs, Walmart in fact led the fight against a proposal to have global retailers underwrite safety improvements at factories in Bangladesh.