



FAIR LABOR
ASSOCIATION

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Update Regarding Ocean Sky Apparel Factory in El Salvador

On June 22, 2011, Salvadoran women's rights organization, Mujeres Transformando, sent a letter to Ocean Sky International alleging noncompliances related to harassment or abuse and hours of work at the Ocean Sky Apparel factory in El Salvador.¹ The letter updated and expanded on concerns which were originally raised by Mujeres Transformando and the Institute for Global Labour & Human Rights in January 2011. Following the original allegations, the FLA commissioned an independent investigation by monitoring organization COVERCO and published a report and remediation plan.²

With the cooperation of Ocean Sky Apparel, COVERCO conducted a follow-up investigation based on the June 2011 allegations regarding verbal abuse and hours of work. COVERCO's investigation report confirmed: 1) the use of verbal harassment and abuse by some supervisors; and 2) pressure on workers by supervisors and line leaders to work overtime, specifically during the months of May and June in 2011.³ In addition to the follow-up COVERCO investigation, the Department of Process Engineering and Environmental Sciences of the "Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas" (UCA) re-tested the water supply at the factory, which had previously been found to contain a mesophilic bacterial count above the Salvadorian norm. According to the UCA report released on September 22, "[water] samples demonstrate the absence of mesophilic aerobic bacteria, therefore [it] is considered suitable for human consumption..."⁴

Based on the findings of the COVERCO investigation, Ocean Sky Apparel accepted the FLA's recommendation to expand the original remediation plan to include the following action items:⁵

- Fully implement the factory's disciplinary procedures to the supervisors identified as violating the non-harassment or abuse policy;

¹ The letter is available at <http://www.globallabourrights.org/alerts?id=0344>.

² The FLA's summary report, full investigation report, and remediation plan can be accessed at https://www.fairlabor.org/fla/Public/pub/Images_XFile/R409/ocean_sky_final%20report_mar25.pdf.

³ Read COVERCO's June 23, 2011 report in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

⁴ UCA's water testing report was completed on September 22, 2011. Read the report in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

⁵ See the updated remediation plan in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

- Switch supervisors identified as engaging in verbal abuse to other production lines as part of the disciplinary process;
- Expand the non-harassment or abuse training to all Ocean Sky Apparel employees, including Human Resources staff;
- Conduct impact assessment of the non-harassment or abuse training process and measure mindset change of participants;
- Review existing grievance procedure to ensure that all past and future grievances are properly investigated and addressed.
- Fully implement the newly-created non-retaliation policy by assigning someone to be responsible for its implementation and communication to all employees.

On July 6, Ocean Sky Apparel management met with the complainants in San Salvador and discussed the above action items. They also agreed to establish a permanent monthly table meeting to address workers' concerns. Two dialogue table meetings have taken place since that initial discussion (July 27 and August 18), and Mujeres Transformando and Ocean Sky management are considering training opportunities for supervisors, leaders and human resources staff related to team work motivation, dispute resolution, leadership, and assertive communication.

In collaboration with sourcing brands, the FLA will continue monitoring the implementation of the remediation plan and supporting the progress of the dialogue table meetings.