

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CINTAS CORPORATION, headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio, is the largest uniform rental provider in North America with over \$2.7 billion in revenue last fiscal year. With over 5 million uniform wearers to supply, procuring a steady stream of garments is a significant cost of doing business. While just a few years ago the company was advertising its U.S.-made uniforms, Cintas has increasingly outsourced its garment production to cut the cost of its uniforms.

Yet off-shoring and subcontracting bring with them a whole new set of risks as production standards, quality, and working conditions become harder to control and harder to ensure. As garment companies outsource production, many, including Cintas, have turned to Codes of Conduct that require contractors to certify that they follow the code. Cintas' code requires that vendors follow applicable laws, and maintain basic health and safety standards, treat workers with respect and honor the right to organize. However, in relying upon the word of contractors, companies attempt to evade responsibility for conditions, and avoid taking proactive measures like rigorous and regular independent monitoring and enforcement.

Workers in Chicago, Haiti, and Mexico at facilities that have made Cintas garments have reported sweatshop conditions that keep them in deep poverty while they work long hours at jobs that may be unsafe.

- In Chicago, Illinois, workers at subcontractors producing for Cintas within miles of a Cintas manufacturing center face illegally low wages of as little as \$3 an hour. Workers say they are required to work through lunch and breaks and have been made to work off-the-clock.
- In Haiti, workers work long days to meet high quotas, yet they earn so little that they must go into debt to survive. Wages that are less than half of what is needed to feed a family drive workers to borrow from factory management and to go into debt to food vendors.

Workers report sweltering heat inside the plant and dust or fiber filled air. Yet they say they do not receive clean, cool water, dust masks, or other safety equipment.

- In Mexico, workers who assemble Cintas goods must wait for a ticket in order to use the bathroom for under 5 minutes. The bathrooms, they report, are dirty and often broken. Workers face intense production pressure from supervisors and are not allowed to speak to each other while working.

Thousands of miles apart, workers in facilities that made Cintas uniforms reported similar problems of high quotas and low wages, lint and dust filled air, excess heat, and machines without safety guards. The Code of Conduct has not effectively ensured that garment facilities are providing adequate conditions for these workers. Rather, the code hides worker abuse and sweatshop conditions as Cintas squeezes pennies out of the cost of making aprons, shirts, and pants.