

Accord Policy Inspections Joint Accord – Alliance Factories

BACKGROUND

The Accord is committed to completing initial inspections of all Accord producing factories in order to identify critical life safety issues.

These initial inspections represent a portion of the work of the Accord in Bangladesh. Although critical, identifying the greatest life safety hazards is just the start of a five-year program of factory remediation, establishing factory level health and safety committees, safety monitoring systems, and safety training that will guarantee an on-going safety culture. Workers' rights and workers' knowledge of safety, in particular, are essential to maintaining safe factories beyond the four remaining years of the Accord.

Within that broader context, the inspection and remediation of the factories is essential to providing a safe environment that must then be monitored and maintained by the people using the building on a daily basis. In this regard, the Accord is set up to provide the initial inspections, issue public inspection reports, approve corrective action plans, and closely monitor that the corrective actions are being implemented.

There is a strong desire by the Government of Bangladesh, factory owners and brands to avoid duplicate inspections at factories producing both for Accord and Alliance signatory brands (about 15% of all Accord factories). Out of respect for these concerns, the Accord has sought from the outset to find a way to avoid duplication at the joint factories while ensuring the integrity of the Accord program. Toward this end, the Accord scheduled its factory inspections so as to place the joint factories at the end of the process, in hope that a resolution would by then have been achieved. However, since the Alliance has inspected the joint factories, the Accord can only avoid duplication by seeking a way to give consideration to the Alliance inspection reports.

The Alliance inspections can be divided into two categories: inspections done by firms hired directly by the Alliance and inspections done by firms hired by Alliance brands.

The Accord requires inspections to be carried out independently of individual brands, by persons acting under the direction of the Accord's Chief Safety Inspector. Inspection work directed by or on behalf of Alliance brands does not meet this standard.

With respect to the inspections done under the direction of the Alliance staff, the Accord's Chief Inspector has advised the Accord Steering Committee of methodological concerns. Additionally, there is no obligation under the Alliance program for brands to provide financial support for remediation to factories that need it. Consideration of these Alliance inspections by the Accord requires a policy that addresses these concerns.

The Accord, following the recommendation of its Chief Safety Inspector, has adopted the following policy concerning joint factories:

Accord Policy Statement on Initial Inspections at Joint Accord-Alliance Factories

The Accord cannot give consideration to Alliance inspection reports produced under the direction of Alliance brands. The Accord will give qualified consideration to inspection reports by firms working for the Alliance staff, utilizing these reports in the formulation of corrective action plans. The qualifications are as follows:

- All corrective action plans must meet the approval of the Accord's Chief Safety Inspector;
- The Accord program will be fully carried out, including follow up inspections during the remediation process, which will allow Accord engineers to address any and all shortcomings of the Alliance inspections;
- All Accord obligations will remain in full effect for Accord brands, including remediation financing, regardless of whether Alliance brands accept these obligations.

This approach will address concerns that have been expressed by stakeholders about duplicate inspections, while ensuring that Accord safety standards are being met and an acceptable level of life safety is achieved in all factories producing for Accord brands. The Accord Steering Committee agrees that the independence and integrity of the overall Accord inspection program is maintained through this approach.