

Platform for Safety in Apparel and Footwear Industry



Panel discussion 2: Prevention vs. Reaction: Strategies for Proactive Safety Management



Platform for Safety in Apparel and Footwear Industry

04 October 2024

EVENT REPORT

Event Summary

The Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative launched the 'Platform for Safety in Apparel and Footwear Industry (PSAFI)' (the "Platform") as a collaborative program to promote safety and sustainable development in the apparel, textile, footwear and accessories industry in India.

The Platform was launched in 2023 to provide a trusted, neutral space for industry stakeholders to unite, discuss, and exchange ideas and insights on addressing safety issues in the sector.

The Platform aims to accelerate actions on safety and facilitate coordination and alignment across initiatives while focusing on the promotion of a preventative safety culture and the collaboration between governments, employers, workers, and associations.

PSAFI held its second event in Bangalore, India on October 4, 2024, with 140 participants representing multiple brands, factories, and industry experts.



Industry



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Safety Leadership and Accountability







Introduction

Apparel, Textile, Footwear and Accessories Industry in India

The market for Indian textiles and apparel is projected to grow at a 10% CAGR to reach USD \$ 350 billion by 2030.¹ Moreover, India is the world's third-largest exporter of textiles and apparel and ranks among the top five global exporters in several textile categories, with exports expected to reach USD \$ 100 billion.¹

The textiles and apparel industry contributes 2.3% to the country's GDP, 13% to industrial production, and 12% to exports. The textile industry in India is predicted to double its contribution to the GDP, rising from 2.3% to approximately 5% by the end of this decade.²

Background

The Life and Building Safety (LABS) Initiative is an industry-driven program, in which multiple brands and retailers join forces with public organizations to operate a scalable program to mitigate preventable fire, electrical, and structural-safety risks in key apparel, footwear and accessories- producing countries in a targeted fashion.

Many workers in key apparel-producing countries work in unsafe environments, which can have lethal consequences. The mission of the LABS Initiative is to provide safer working conditions for factory workers in the apparel, footwear and accessories industry.

We organize our activities to identify and solve risks related to fire and electrical hazards, structural building safety, and evacuation procedures for workers to lead better lives.

During this effort, we have recognized the need for broader industry-wide collaboration to drive sector-level change, given its highly worker-intensive nature.

Hence, this forum was created to drive the intent with collective discussions, definite outcomes, and purposeful follow-up.

¹ <https://www.investindia.gov.in/sector/textiles-apparel>

² Ministry of Textile

PSAFI 2024

Purpose and Scope

PSAFI aims to foster a preventative safety culture, enable effective consultation and cooperation among stakeholders, and improve the management of building-safety risks in the industry.

Some key objectives of the Platform include:

- ③ Identifying opportunities to scale interventions
- ③ Improving management of building-safety risks and transparency in reporting, promoting gender empowerment, and driving positive changes in safe working conditions in factories and industrial parks across the country and the manufacturing sector

Opening Address

Mr. Sarobindo Malhotra, Global Program Lead, LABS Initiative, addressed the gathering and set the context by emphasizing the role of each stakeholder to drive the safety culture throughout the industry.



Opening Statements

Dr. Lalit Gabhane, Director General of the National Safety Council (NSC), underscored the importance of individuals' commitment to safety.

"Each one of you working in this industry should show the commitment that you are the safety leader because, each day, your family expects you to go back home safe.

If you can realize that, then the Indian industry will become the safest place to work."



Mr. Navaneeth Mohan, Joint Director, Department of Factories, Government of Karnataka, highlighted the critical role of organizational commitment to safety.

"Organizations must have unwavering commitment towards safety and safety is not compromised for the sake of operational convenience or cost reduction. It is very important to address the psychology of the workforce and build trust and respect by demonstrating a genuine concern for their well-being."

Panel Discussions

1. Strengthening Safety Leadership and Accountability

Panelists:

🕒 **Mr. Navneeth Mohan**, Joint Director, Department of Factories
Government of Karnataka

🕒 **Dr. Lalit Gabhane**, Director General, National Safety Council (NSC)

🕒 **Mr. Syed Wilayath Hussain Zaidi**, Senior Consultant – CSR program initiatives and
monitoring, Texport Industries Pvt., Ltd.

Moderator: **Mr. Sridhar Rajgopal**, Chief Mentor, Redefine Technologies & Board
Member, Classic Fashion Foundation

Key Issues

- 🕒 **Safety Leadership:** emphasize characteristics of effective safety leaders, their role in shaping safety culture, and strategies for development
- 🕒 **Worker-Centric Approach:** engage workers as partners in safety, ensure their well-being, and address concerns
- 🕒 **Stakeholder Accountability:** define roles and responsibilities of management, supervisors, workers, and regulatory bodies to maintain safety standards
- 🕒 **Safety Metrics and Monitoring:** discuss effective indicators to measure safety performance, data-driven decision-making, and transparent reporting as well as how to learn from them
- 🕒 **Training and Capacity Building:** develop safety skills, knowledge, and competencies across the organization
- 🕒 **Technology and Innovation:** leverage technology to enhance safety, improve monitoring, and reduce risks
- 🕒 **Regulatory Compliance:** understand Indian laws and regulations (e.g., Factories Act, 1948; Occupational Safety, Health, and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code, 2020) and international standards
- 🕒 **Supply-Chain Responsibility:** ensure safety across the supply chain, including vendor management and auditing.



Outcomes

- ⑥ Increased awareness of the importance of safety leadership and accountability to achieve industry growth
- ⑥ Shared best practices and strategies to develop effective safety leadership
- ⑥ Identification of areas for regulatory improvement and industry collaboration
- ⑥ Networking opportunities for industry stakeholders to discuss safety-related challenges and solutions.

“There is a need for us to understand the context of the regulation and approach the authorities with the mindset of learning and improving.”

- Mr. Navneeth Mohan

Joint Director, Department of Factories, Government of Karnataka



“Make your workplace a benchmark so that others come to you to learn from you. Safety subjects need to be taught as part of the school curriculum so that everyone imbibes it as a culture.”

- Dr. Lalit Gabhane

Director General

National Safety Council (NSC)



“If you want workers to be involved in the understanding [of] the importance, one need to connect with workers and reciprocate with empathy. Auditing should not be a fault-finding exercise, it should be used to develop organization to do better every time.”

- Mr. Syed Wilayath Hussain Zaidi

Senior Consultant – CSR program initiatives and monitoring, Texport Industries Pvt., Ltd.



2. Prevention vs. Reaction: Strategies for Proactive Safety Management

Panelists:

- 🎙️ **Mr. Sireesh Kumar**, Chief of Compliance, Gokaldas Exports Limited
 - 🎙️ **Major (Retired) Ratnakar Bade**, Chief Executive Officer, IIRIS Consulting Pvt., Ltd.
 - 🎙️ **Mr. Sachin Jain**, General Manager – Projects, Shahi Exports Pvt., Ltd
 - 🎙️ **Mr Gautham Subramanya**, EHS Manager, ITC Limited
 - 🎙️ **Mr Nikunj Seth**, Senior Engineering Manager, ITC Limited
- Moderator:** Madhu KA, Country Manager (India) – LABS Initiative

Key Issues

- 🎙️ **Current State of Safety in the Industry:** review common safety hazards and challenges faced within the industry
- 🎙️ **Importance of Proactive Safety Management:** implement proactive safety measures to reduce accidents, improve productivity, and enhance brand reputation
- 🎙️ **Effective Safety Management Systems:** apply best practices of safety management systems including risk assessments, training programs, and emergency preparedness
- 🎙️ **Regulatory Framework:** review Indian laws and regulations governing workplace safety (e.g., Factories Act, 1948; OSHWC Code, 2020)
- 🎙️ **Technological Interventions:** increase technology's role in enhancing safety through automation, sensors, and data analytics
- 🎙️ **Supply-Chain Responsibility:** strategize safety measures across the supply chain, including vendor management and auditing
- 🎙️ **Worker Engagement and Training:** highlight worker participation and training to maintain a safe work environment
- 🎙️ **Sustainability and Business Continuity:** recognize long-term benefits of proactive safety management, including reducing costs, improving morale, and enhancing business resilience.

Panel discussion 2: Prevention vs. Reaction: Strategies for Proactive Safety Management



Outcomes

- ⦿ Increased awareness of the importance of proactive safety management in the apparel, footwear, and textile industry
- ⦿ Sharing of best practices and strategies to implement effective safety management systems
- ⦿ Identification of areas for regulatory improvement and industry collaboration
- ⦿ Networking opportunities for industry stakeholders to discuss safety-related challenges and solutions.

“There is a need for industry to come together and collectively understand the safety-compliance requirement and bridge the gap by discussing with regulatory authorities as a collective approach.”

- Mr. Sireesh Kumar

Chief of Compliance, Gokaldas Exports Limited



“Emergency response system is very important to manage incidents effectively and continue to test them [to] try the effectiveness.”

- Major (Retired) Ratnakar Bade

Chief Executive Officer, IIRIS Consulting Pvt., Ltd.



Apparel industry for a long time had focused only on production efficiency, however it is been realized that worker well-being and safety is important and it can be driven only by adding it as part of organization core value.”

- Mr. Sachin Jain

General Manager – Projects, Shahi Exports Pvt., Ltd.



“One should aim at being the benchmark factory and organization should have bottom line measure for safety and that is how top-down approach can be effectively implemented.”

- Mr Gautham Subramanya

EHS Manager, ITC Limited

“Having the proactive approach by building the system with layers of leadership involvement with defined ownership and using the technology to manage it effectively helped our organization as a proven case. Motivating teams to report near misses then thus achieving zero accidents over the periods of time.”

- Mr Nikunj Seth

Senior Engineering Manager, ITC Ltd



Workshops

1. Role of Safety Officers and Safety Managers

Speaker: Akshay Hotkar, Deputy Director, National Safety Council

Safety is the primary responsibility vested in the safety officers of the factory. In the Indian context, the apparel and textile industry needs well-defined safety manager/officer roles and responsibilities. Even though most factories have a dedicated safety manager in their system, their roles are vaguely defined and their responsibilities are not allocated as per the requirements.



Discussion Points

- ⑥ Introduction and Requirement to Appoint Safety Officers
- ⑥ Qualification of Safety Officers – as per Statutes
- ⑥ Number of Safety Officers Required – as per Statutes
- ⑥ Roles and Responsibilities of Safety Officer and Managers – Legal Perspectives
- ⑥ Roles and Responsibilities of Safety Officers and Managers – Good Safety Practices
- ⑥ How NSC is Helping Safety Officers and Managers to Deliver Their Roles and Responsibilities Effectively

2. Experience Sharing and Safety Management Systems

Speaker: Ankith Hegde, Program Manager, LABS



A Safety Management System (SMS) is a systematic approach to managing safety, integrating organizational structures, responsibilities, and processes to minimize risks and ensure a safe working environment. A holistic approach towards driving safety systems' implementation in premises can happen only through the effective structuring of an SMS.

Key Benefits

- ⦿ **Reduce Accidents and Injuries:** identify and mitigate hazards to minimize harm to people, equipment, and the environment
- ⦿ **Enhance Compliance:** ensure adherence to regulatory requirements, industry standards, and best practices
- ⦿ **Improve Employee Engagement:** foster a safety culture and encourage employee participation and accountability
- ⦿ **Optimize Operations:** streamline processes, reduce downtime, and increase productivity
- ⦿ **Protect Reputation:** demonstrate organizational commitment to safety, enhancing credibility and stakeholder trust
- ⦿ **Reduce Costs:** minimize liability, insurance costs, and financial losses associated with accidents.

Discussion Points

- ⦿ Safety management system (SMS) overview
- ⦿ Understanding the need for SMS
- ⦿ Components of SMS and elements of each component
- ⦿ Safety risk-management systems
- ⦿ Examples of SMS implementation
- ⦿ Graduation relevance of LABS and general safety requirements

NEXT STEPS

- ③ **Collaborate with participants** and potential stakeholders to understand the possibility of capacity-building efforts at various levels
- ③ **Strategize with participants** and potential stakeholders on how worker empowerment can be driven through training on safety risks due to fire, electrical, and structural safety
- ③ **Reach out to potential stakeholders** with an engagement plan to determine in what capacity they can engage and contribute.





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