

Q1 2021 HELPLINE HEADLINES

Commemorating the tragedy at Rana Plaza

Eight years ago, the Rana Plaza factory collapse resulted in the deaths of 1,134 people and over 2,500 injuries. The following year, the Amader Kotha Helpline began operations with a mission to provide workers with a channel for reporting and resolving safety and labor problems they witnessed in the workplace. After all, workers are often able to spot hazards long before they escalate into harm to people and property. We are proud to have been a part of the solution; we know we have saved lives. We dedicate this issue of Our Voice to the memory of those who died at Rana Plaza and those who continue to endure hardships resulting from their injuries.

Helpline headlines by the numbers

Since its inception in 2014, the Amader Kotha Helpline had been launched in 1,180 factories reaching approximately 1.5 million workers. In the first quarter of the year, 9,830 calls were received of which 25% were about substantial issues. About 8% of issues were related to COVID-19 and the pandemic.

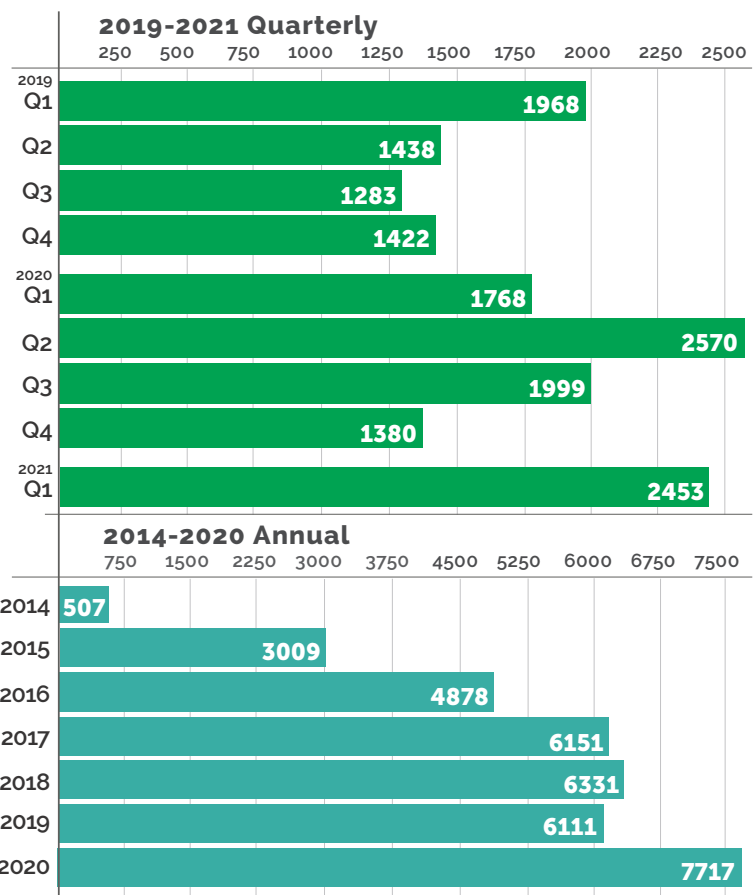
Workers continued to have access to trained Helpline officers via a toll-free number that is available nationwide from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. on weekdays. After hours and weekend calls are returned the next business day.

In this edition

As part of our efforts to bring awareness to key factory issues, in this edition our IN FOCUS article is: *Electrical Safety | A Vital Component of Decent Working Conditions*. We hope you will find it informative.

As always, we look forward to hearing from you with comments and suggestions at: info@amaderkothahelpline.net.

SUBSTANTIVE ISSUES REPORTED TO HELPLINE

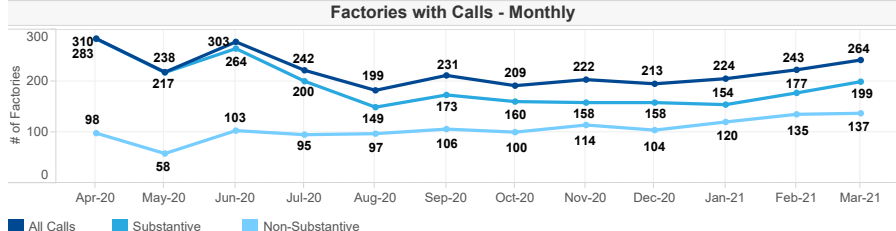
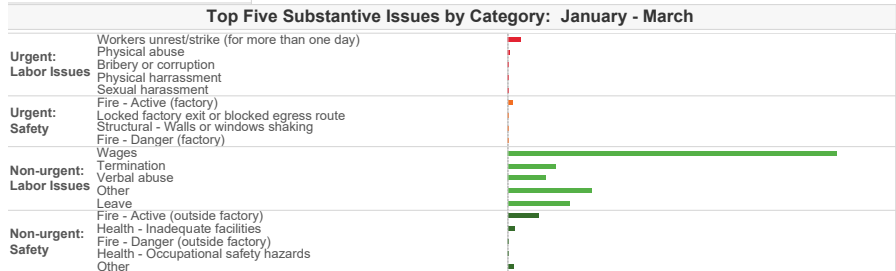
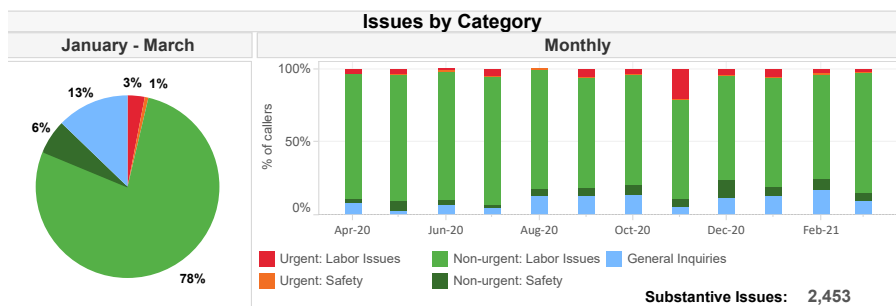
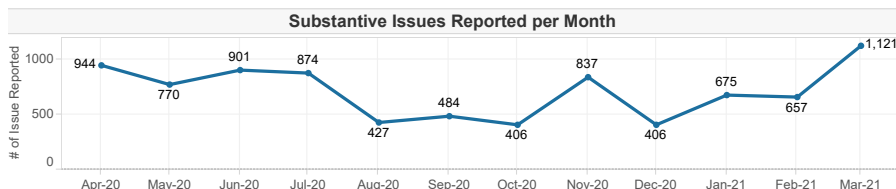
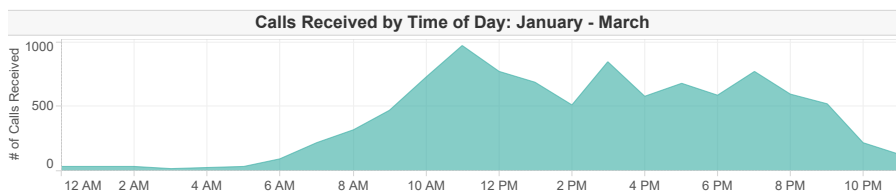
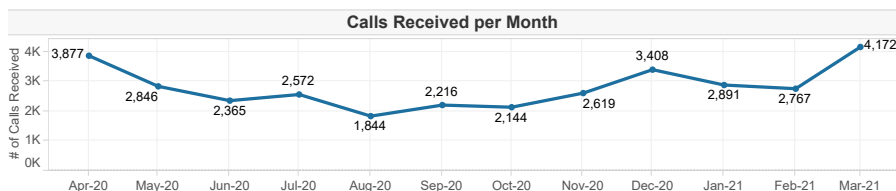




FIRST QUARTER 2021 FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS INCLUDE:

- **9,830 calls were placed to Amader Kotha in the first quarter of 2021**, for a total of 34,421 calls received in the past 12 months..
- **2021 call volumes remained at historic highs**, including a record 4,172 in March 2021 due to the recent spike of COVID-19 cases in Bangladesh and subsequent nationwide government lockdown.
- **25% (2,453) of calls received were substantive issues.** A majority related to non-urgent labor issues such as compensation including wages and bonuses, termination and leave, and verbal abuse from supervisors. In total, 18 urgent safety and 84 urgent labor issues were reported to the Helpline.
- **The most reported urgent issues were related to worker unrest / strike (for more than one day) as well as active fires inside factories, locked factory exits or blocked egress routes, physical and sexual harassment, and bribery or corruption cases.**
- **General inquiries comprised 7.4% of issues this period**, disregarding missed or test calls. Many of these were requests for information related to COVID-19.
- **On average, the peak call times in 2021 were between 10:00am and 7:00pm**, suggesting workers are more comfortable calling throughout the day.



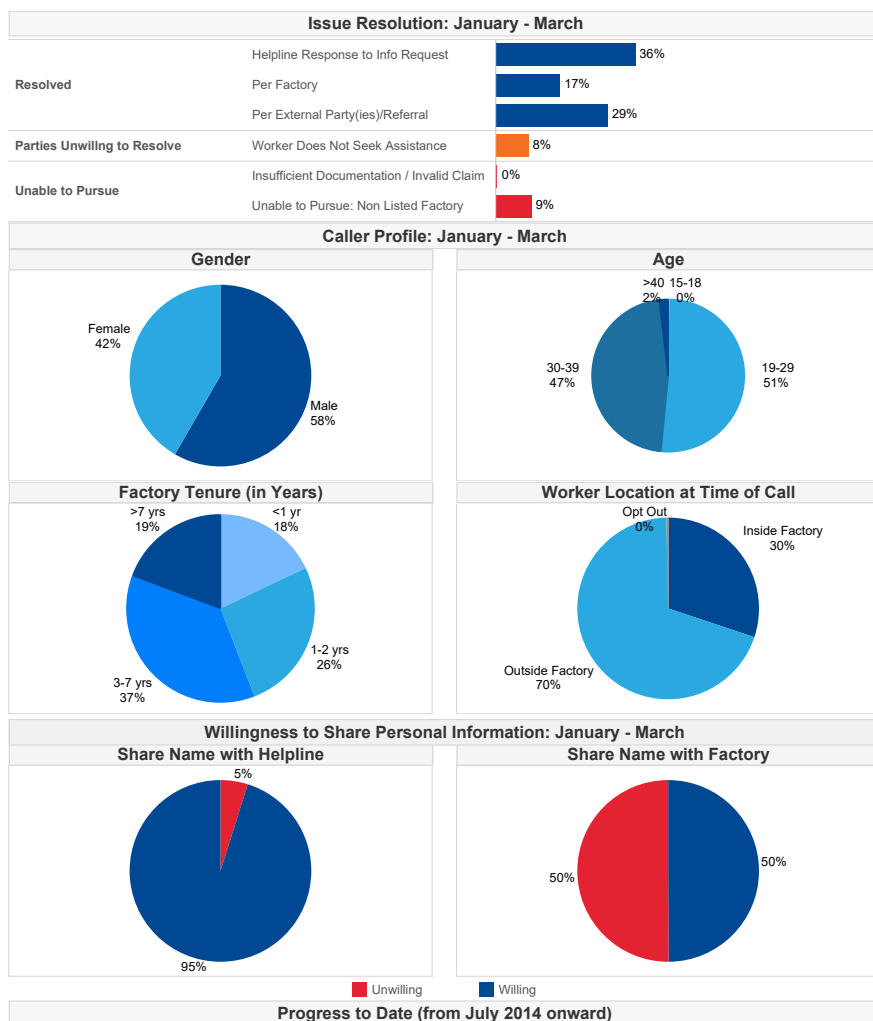
FIRST QUARTER 2021 FINDINGS

KEY FINDINGS, CONTINUED:

- 90% of all issues reported in the first quarter of 2021 from workers at factories were resolved and closed by the end of March. All remaining open issues are in the process of being closed in accordance with Amader Kotha protocols.
- 95% of workers that called to report a substantive issue this period were comfortable sharing their name with the Helpline and, of that group, 50% would allow their name to be shared with the factory.
- Of the 1,000+ factories that have received training on the Helpline, workers from 264 factories placed calls to the Helpline in March 2021, a record high for the previous three-month period, in part drive by COVID-related engagement.

COVID-19 HIGHLIGHTS:

- Despite an increase in total calls from January to March 2021, the percent of COVID-19 related calls remains constant at about 8% of the total calls from workers, most of them about compensation and job security, including termination, payouts, and leave.
- Given the recent spike in COVID-19 cases and nationwide lockdown, the Helpline continues to provide urgent support for workers concerned about the impact of the coronavirus on the future of their employment, their health, and their ability to support themselves and their families.



Total Calls	
Inbound	33,721
Outbound	563,542

Substantive Issues	
	39,145

Helpline Launched Factories	
Factories:	1,180
Workers:	> 1.5 million

Notes:

- Graphs do not include calls from "General Inquiry", "False", or "No category" issue categories, except graphs on calls received and calls by time of day and where otherwise stated.
- Calls have been received from non-participating factories. These calls are included in the call volume and call time and factories with calls graphs above, but not included in the issue or caller profile visualizations.
- Substantive issues per month graph may not match historical newsletters due to changes in issue categorization over time.
- # of workers and # of factories where the Helpline has been launched are based on information on the Helpline's CRM database.

NOTE: Detailed call data is provided to brands after factories have had the opportunity to verify and respond to information provided by workers.

IN FOCUS: Electrical Safety | A Vital Component of Decent Working Conditions

—Paul Rigby, Chief Executive and Chief Safety Officer, Nirapon

EDITOR'S NOTE: In Q1 2021, workers reported several smoke or fire-related incidents in factories caused by or contributed to by electrical safety issues. Fortunately, no injuries were reported.



A simple definition of “electricity” can be described as the flow of electrons through a conductor. The two key things to remember about electricity are that it must make a circuit and it will always seek the easiest path to earth or ground.

Electricity is the lifeline of a factory... without safe electrical systems apparel production cannot happen.

More than 2000 years ago a Greek man named Thales noticed that when amber was rubbed with silk it attracted feathers and other light objects. He had discovered static electricity. The Greek word for amber is **elektron**, from which we get **electricity** and **electronics**.

In 1870, Thomas Edison built a DC electric generator and in 1879 the first fatal accident due to an electric shock was recorded.

A simple definition of “electricity” can be described as the flow of electrons through a conductor.

Some materials are better at conducting electricity than others. The resistance of a material measures how well something conducts electricity. Some materials hold electrons very tightly, have high resistance and are good insulators such as rubber, plastic, cloth, glass and dry air. Other materials have some loosely held electrons, which move through them very easily and are considered good conductors such as copper, aluminum or steel.

The two key things to remember about electricity is that it must make a circuit and it will always seek the easiest path to earth or ground.

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IN FOCUS: Electrical Safety, continued

The flow to ground that electricity will follow is always the path of least resistance. This can be caused by a defect in electrical equipment or could be caused by an object coming into contact with defective equipment, such as a person.

CIRCUIT BREAKERS



Circuit breakers must be the correct size with the correct size cable for the power required.

Circuit breakers are essential safety devices installed to protect the circuit by preventing the electricity from making a circuit should a problem be detected in that circuit. A circuit breaker will drop the power if there is a defect or leakage to ground. This prevents an electrocution or a fire from starting. If circuit breakers are cutting the power, it means that there is a problem with the circuit and a competent electrician must be consulted to rectify the problem. Replacing the circuit breaker with a larger one is dangerous and is not a solution.

Electrical accidents are caused by circumstances that are varied and peculiar to the particular incidents involved. Closer examination usually reveals the underlying cause under two main headings:

1. A WORKPLACE WITH UNSAFE EQUIPMENT, INSTALLATIONS OR CONDITIONS

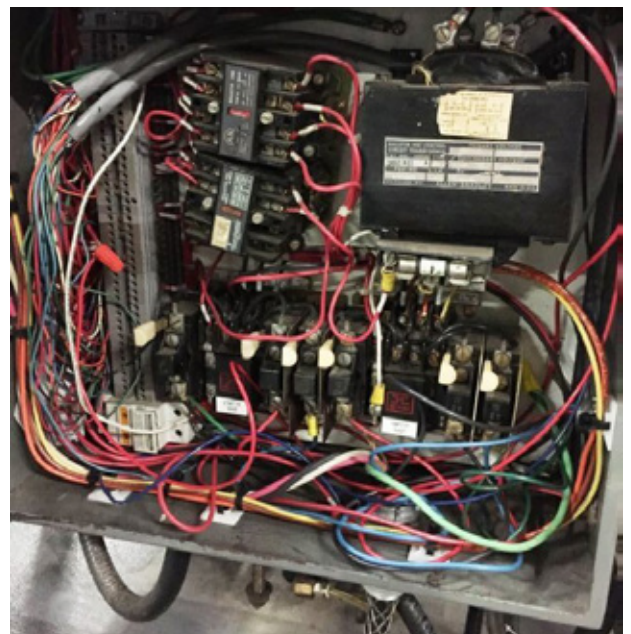
Some unsafe electrical equipment and installations can be identified, for example, by the presence of faulty insulation, improper grounding, loose connections, defective parts, ground

ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION BOARD Housing Circuit Breakers



Distribution board should be locked at all times and accessed only by competent electrical engineers.

Example of an UNSAFE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATION



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IN FOCUS: Electrical Safety, continued

faults in equipment, unguarded live parts, and underrated equipment. Inadequate maintenance can also cause equipment or installations originally considered safe to deteriorate, resulting in an unsafe condition.

2. UNSAFE WORK PRACTICE

Unsafe practices include the failure to de-energize electric equipment when it is being repaired or inspected, the use of tools or equipment that is too close to energized parts, not having a rubber mat at every distribution board, not having a Perspex cover inside the cabinet, using an unlocked distribution board cabinet, or when an engineer does not have the correct tools and PPE.

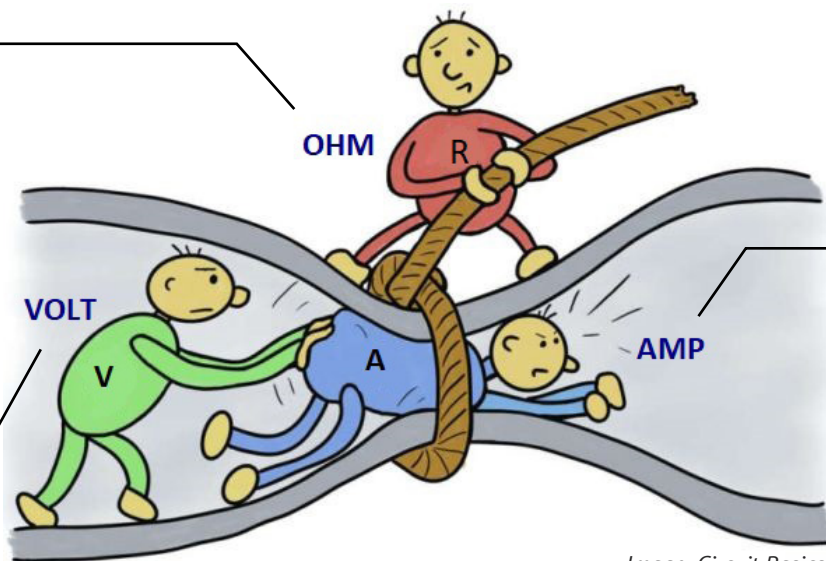
Correct size circuit—ELECTRICAL LOAD MANAGEMENT

OHM

measurement of resistance, the smaller the cable, the greater the resistance

VOLT

measurement of electric force in the flow of electricity



AMP

measurement of the current or the strength of the electricity

Image: Circuit Basics

Resistance is the same as friction and resistance or friction generate HEAT

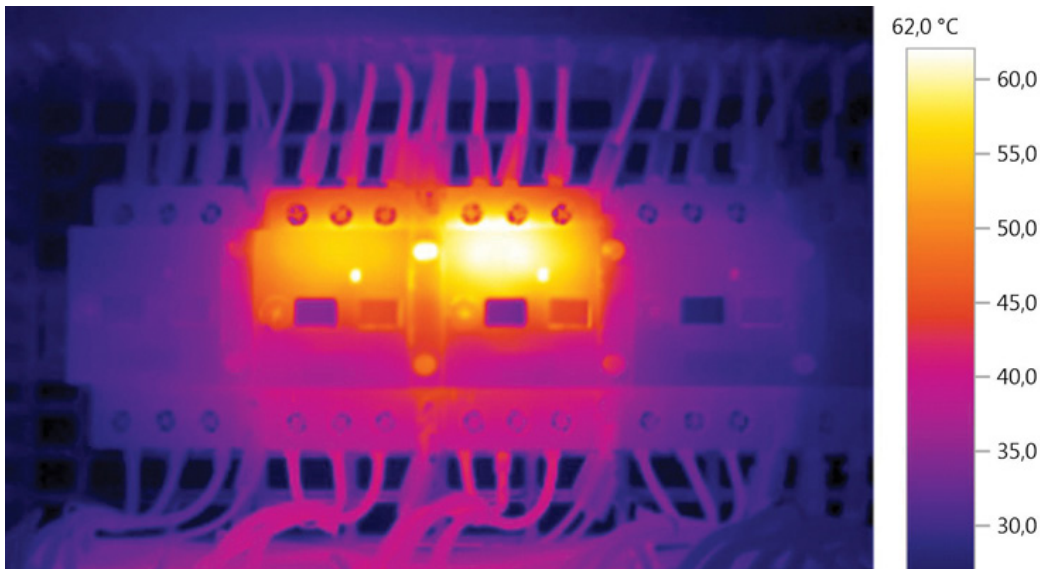


Damage to a sewing machine following the use of an oversized circuit breaker.

The most common electrical safety issue found in factories is fitting circuit breakers that are too large for a circuit and/or the wiring is too small for the circuit. In either case this allows more electricity to flow than the circuit is designed to handle. This increases resistance and so more heat is created which leads to fires and also electrocutions as the circuit breakers are too big and less 'sensitive' to any fault in the circuit.

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IN FOCUS: Electrical Safety, continued



In one instance a factory was found to have bypassed the circuit breakers completely meaning that the flow of electricity could not be interrupted by the circuit breakers if there was a problem. This was a very dangerous condition that could have led to a fatal electrocution or a serious fire.

Thermographic scan reveals circuit breaker hotspots. Image: Carelabs.

How to assess if your current electrical system is safe:

If a circuit breaker keeps dropping it means that the circuit has a defect or the circuit is overloaded. A competent electrician should be called to find and repair the defect, which could be a machine connected to the circuit, or calculate the actual load on the circuit. A thermographic scan will also reveal any hotspots caused by areas of high resistance in the circuit. These scans of industrial electrical circuits should be carried out every 4 months.

WHO ARE WE?

Amader Kotha, or “Our Voice” in Bangla, is a unique collaboration among three project partners—Clear Voice, a project of The Cahn Group that operates hotlines and builds effective grievance mechanisms in supply chains; Phulki, a respected civil society organization working to improve the lives of workers and their families in Bangladesh; and ELEVATE, the parent company of Laborlink, a leading business risk and sustainability solutions provider. Each partner brings years of experience building innovative, best-in-class labor compliance programs in supply chains.

