

Front office operations



Front office and guest safety and security Security Issues -----

Security encompasses areas such as security of the property itself, company assets, employees' and customers' personal belongings and valuables, life security, personal security etc. In all workplaces management stipulates that it is not responsible for valuables and employees personal belongings (their handbags, items kept in the personal lockers, etc. . Yet management must take all possible measures to prevent theft among employees and of employee belongings through its hiring practices and through the implementation of effective management, human resources and operational policies, such as:

- Background checks of selected applicants
- Policies related to employees' entry to, and exit from, the workplace
- Spot checks of locker rooms and lockers
- Effective supervision and control during the work cycle
- Policies related to the discovery of criminal records and wrongdoing among, and by, employees
- Control of people entering and exiting the workplace

With regard to guest valuables, management informs guests that the hotel is not responsible for valuables left in the room, advising them to secure these in safety deposit boxes provided by the hotel.

Besides taking care of security issues related to the people they employ (as outlined above), management must undertake some necessary measures, among which:

- Providing "secure" (safety) deposit boxes and areas to keep valuables
- Policies and practices to ensure the security of these boxes and areas
- Management and operational policies regarding the security of guest rooms
- Management and operational policies regarding the security of public areas
- Security policies and practices for the back-of-the-house areas
- Employment and training of security personnel
- Policies and practices to

minimize the " presence" and " patronage" of " shady characters" and criminals, verification of registration and check-in personal data and documentation submitted, and curtailing free movement of unknowns on the premises, as well as direct, free flowing communication with local, national and international security authorities) • Training of staff in guest and valuable security • Effective supervision and control procedures. Some of the security measures taken by hotels: | | Key Card Locks: | | While key card locks on guest rooms are quickly becoming the standard, some hotels still don't take advantage of the added safety | | provided to guests. | | Guest room locking systems these days include punch and magnetic key cards which have locks with flash memory and other productivity | | linked functions. The system can directly be linked with PMS. | Security Guards: | | Most hotels do not have security guards while some employ them only at night. At Best Western Sterling Inn, we have our own staff of | | trained security guards working 24-hours every day to provide the best in safety and security for our guests | | Defibrillation Units: | | A life saving device in case of heart attacks, defibrillation units are starting to be deployed among police and emergency personnel | | across the nation. | Security Cameras: | | Few Hotels have security cameras with digital technology, intelligent access central system, software interface with CCTV for matching | | undesirable visitors and criminals, interfacing with motion detectors, pocket lie detectors and spy cameras and use of biometric | | readers like hand key reader or face recognition system etc. | Fire Alarms: | | While most hotels now have smoke detectors and fire alarms, Some hotels have a state of the art alarm system with smoke detectors in | | each guest room and throughout the entire complex that is monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days per week that

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pinpoints the exact point of | | the alarm allowing our security staff to respond immediately to the area of any alarm condition. | Emergency Power: | | Very few hotels have any provision for emergency power in case of an electrical outage while a few hotels provide limited emergency | | stand-by power to provide elevator service and some lighting. Some hotels has a 2-Megawatt stand-by generator that provides 100% | | emergency power that can provide uninterrupted guest service during a power outage. | Emergency Manual: | | Hotels maintain an emergency manual, detailing operations in the event of a variety of emergencies. | | EmployeePhotoID: | | For added security, some hotels have employees wearing a photo ID nametag allowing quick identification. | In-Room Safes: | | In addition to the safety deposit boxes offered by most hotels at the front desks, Some hotels provide in-room guest safes capable of | | holding a lap-top computer that use the guest's own credit card as the key. | | Guest elevators: | | Elevators may also be interfaced with a room electronic locking system, where swiping the room card key takes the guest to the floor | | on which he is staying. | Bomb threat security:

Precautions and measures that may be taken in the above case: 1. Security nets and body searches for guests not known to the staff. 2. Banqueting suites and other non-public areas should be security checked and locked after use 3. Goods received and bags should be checked and kept tidy. 4. If a bomb threat is received via telephone, the telephonist should note carefully what exactly is said, the time of the call received the accent of the caller and background noise if any. After the alert the GM should stay put in the lobby where he can be reached easily. . Duties andresponsibilityof staff during an

emergency should be well-defined. 6. The hotel should work closely with the police to keep them updated. 7. Chamber maids and HK supervisors should be trained to conduct security checks in the guest rooms. Security measures for women travelers -Mirrored walls of the guestroom floor elevators so that you can see who is walking behind you -Well-lit public areas such as lobby bars -Valet parking services to avoid the need of a woman to enter the parking lot -Assigning rooms closer to the elevator If a woman traveler is not assigned a room on the special executive floor, hotels most often on request, upgrade her accommodation to that floor without an increase in room rate. The floor is staffed almost 24 hours a day with a concierge

IMPORTANCE OF A SECURITY SYSTEM The guest, who comes to a particular hotel, comes with an understanding that he and his belongings both will be safe and secure during his stay at the hotel. At the same time it is also quite important that the hotel staff and assets are protected and secure.

Hence it is very important to have a proper security system in place to protect staff, guests and physical resources and assets such as equipment, appliances buildings, gardens of the hotel and also the belongings of the guest. The management must take care that the security and safety systems cover the following areas:

- ? Guest: Protection from crimes such as murder, abduction and health hazards from outsiders, hotel staff, pests, food poisoning etc.
- ? Staff: Providing staff lockers, insurances, health schemes, provident funds etc.

Protective clothing, shoes, fire fighting drills, supply of clean drinking water use of aqua guards, sanitized wash rooms etc. ? Guest luggage: Secure luggage store rooms and proper equipment such as luggage trolley and bell

hop trolley should be provided. ? Hotel Equipments: Lifts, Boilers, Kitchen equipment, furniture fitting and building etc. must be protected and for these the security and safety should cover up fire safety equipment, bomb threat security system, water floods security system, earthquake security system , safe vault security system etc. Protection of raw materials, goods, provisions and groceries etc. for this the security system should cover proper storage and pest control systems, apart from the application of total material management system. TYPES OF SECURITY: 1) Physical aspect 2) Security of persons 3) Security of systems 1) Physical aspect is divided into two parts a) Internal b)external a) Internal security Against theft Fire safety Proper lighting Safeguarding assets Track unwanted guests b) External Security Proper lighting outside the building

Proper fencing of the building Fencing of pool area to avoid accidents in the night Manning of service gates to restrict entry Fixing of closed circuit TV cameras 2) Security aspects of persons a) Staff Effective recruitment and selection Identification of staff Key control Red tag system Training Locker inspection b) Guests: Check scanty baggage guests Guests suspected of taking away hotel property should be charged according to hotel policy Guest room security: Provide wide angle door viewer, dead bolt locks, night torch, chains on doors tc Employees should be trained to not give any information about in house guests to outsiders While issuing a card key ask for key card if in doubt of the guest. House keeping staff should never leave keys expose on unattended carts in corridors 3) Security aspects of systems: Record of all losses and missing items immediately Inventory control should be proper Auditing should be done on a regular basis Proper system for cash

disbursements should be made. The term system implies the operations of the hotel eg: all the equipment used for operation, procedures laid down for operations and policies to be followed.

Systems procedures and policies if followed properly shall safeguard the assets and increase life p of equipment as well as avoid any breakdown maintenance. This would mean the following: Fix duties and responsibilities: Fix duties of staff members so that they don't interfere with others' work. Make surprise checks. Staff who have access to liquid assets should be made to sign a bond so that in case of theft the concerned person can easily be caught. Hiring of some independent security company to check the security system of the hotel. Safety issues -----

When we take the same hotel as example, it is management's duty to ensure " safety" in several areas, such as:

- The structure itself
- Installations and fixtures (check electrical, plumbing, air-conditioning and other installations)
- Public and work areas (e. g. slippery floors, hazardous obstacles in traffic areas), safety of furniture, equipment, appliances, and utensils. This is followed by:
- Health safety (nontoxic cleaning material and detergents used)
- Good quality air (what we breathe, dependent upon the type of equipment, installations and fixtures used, and regular repairs and maintenance)
- Food safety (a whole world in itself including sanitation, food quality, food spoilage, correct handling procedures, allowable and recommended temperatures, etc.), and checking and control procedures. An important " preventive measure" is eliminating the possibility of communicating contagious diseases. Even if local regulations do not require it, it is recommended to send food and beverage handlers for a regular

medical checkup. Another preventive measure is the formulation and implementation of policies and procedures related to employee accidents which may present a threat to food sanitation.

Culinary staff who cut themselves accidentally at work, as often happens while slicing food products, have to immediately stop handling food, and report to their Executive Chef and to the person in charge of First Aid in their company (Security or Human Resources Department) for preliminary treatment and handling. Healing and precautionary measures are taken before they are allowed back at their job. There are also some basic "dress" requirements for staff involved in food and beverage preparations: e. g.

Chefs' hats (to prevent hair and whatever hair contains to fall into the food), discreet earrings (non-dangling) or no earrings for women, and long hair neatly and securely tied in a bun at the back of the head. Of no lesser importance is the safety of work tools and work procedures covering all areas, such as stable ladders, secure shelving, safety shoes, well-fitting work garments, clearly written and complete safety procedures and guidelines from management, safety training, and safety installations and equipment, e. g. fire fighting units, regular maintenance schedules for safety equipment and installations, wider traffic areas (to prevent accidents), adequate staffing, and last but not least, continuous effective training in work procedures. All of this necessitates comprehensive planning, the creation of clear policies and work procedures, organization, implementation, training of supervisors and employees, supervision and control. FIRE: Fires in the hotel may result in the injury and loss of life of both the guests and the staff. Main causes of fire are: i) Smoking: -Smoke only where allowed. -Put out cigarettes

in the right place. Sufficient ash trays should be provided in eating places and in rooms, but away from curtains and draperies. -Educate the guests about fire possibilities due to smoking. ii) Defective wiring, faulty appliances and motor and worn out insulation Such hazards should be immediately reported to the concerned person and such equipment should be immediately repaired iii) Laundry Areas: Care should be taken to see that none of the electrical equipment is left on after use iv) Gas leaks: Precautions should be taken against this especially in kitchen areas. v) Combustible waste Combustible material should never be left near the boiler room i) Kitchen All equipment such as chimneys, exhausts, ventilators, grills, hoods etc. which collect a lot of fume vapor and catch fire easily should be cleaned regularly. vii) Elevator shafts: These require constant check and inspection. Cigarette butts can ignite the debris and oils that gather at the bottom of elevator shafts. Types of Fire and fire extinguishers: Hotel personnel are trained about the fire protection procedure and the types of fire. They must be able to recognize the various types of fire, all fire require air. Air contains O₂ which is necessary for combustion.

Fire has been classified in 5 categories depending on how they can be extinguished- Class A Fire- It is the fire of wood, paper, linen and similar dry materials. They are extinguished by cooling and quenching effect of water. The water reduces the temperature of burning substances below their combustion temperature. These are the most frequent and easiest to extinguish when there is an ample water supply and when water can be directed on the combustible material . Keeping the other combustible

material wet will limit the spreading of fire Class B Fire-These include fires of oil, gasoline, grease and other petroleum product.

These fires are extinguished by blanketing the source of burning substances and eliminating the supply of O₂. Petroleum products is lighter than water and will float on water and continue to burn and spread by means of flowing water to other section of the building, hence water is never used for this category. Class C Fire-These are the fires of pressurized gases. For e. g. L. P. G. , most of the gases are lighter than air but L. P. G. is heavier than air. Water is not to be used for this class of fire. Class D Fire-These are fire of metals having low burning temperature for e. g. Na, Mg etc.

This class of fire does not exist in the hotel. Class E Fire-These are electrical fire. The fire extinguishing agent must not conduct electrical energy which could spread the fire. Electrical fires are usually blanketed and cooled down. Water is a good cooling agent but it also conducts electricity, so it is not used to control or extinguish this class of fire. Electrical fire is usually caused by a part of circuit overheating or by short circuit. Controlling the sizes of electrical fuses and circuit breaker will often minimize this class of fire. There are 2 systems of fire protection . Portable fire extinguisher. 2. Stationary fire fighting system. Portable fire extinguisher a. Soda acid fire extinguisher- It is used for class A fire. The extinguishing agent is H₂O. The fire extinguisher is a cylinder type of pan in which a rubber or flexible hose is attached to the top. When it is desired to use the extinguisher, it is carried to the fire and inverted. A small bottle of acid usually H₂SO₄ is spilled when the cylinder is inverted or turn upside down. Powdered sodas, bicarbonate of soda (Baking Soda) is mixed with H₂O when the tank is charge or fills with water.

The chemical reaction of acid and soda water creates a pressure which forces the water out of the cylinder or tank. The hose is used to direct the flow of water to the fire. It has 2 disadvantages:- -It must be kept away from freezing -Acid causes corrosion problem which reduce the life of the tank or cylinder. The corrosion problem has been minimized by replacing the acid with CO₂ cartridge. Upon the cylinder inversion the cartridge opens and releases CO₂ gas under high pressure. The high pressure gas then forces the water out of cylinder.

b. CaCl₂ fire extinguisher-It is also used on class A fire. CaCl₂ is a salt which when added to water form brine which has very low freezing temperature. CO₂ cartridge is used as pressure agent to force H₂O and CaCl₂ out of the cylinder to the fire. These extinguishers are used where freezing is a potential hazard

c. Foam type extinguisher-It is used on class B type of fire. The extinguisher is charged with special chemical (Al₂SiO₄), the chemical spread on the burning material and the solution, blanket the fire by excluding O₂.

d. CO₂ fire extinguisher- It is used on C, D and E class of fire. The CO₂ types spray a chemical fog towards the fire.

The fog quickly excludes the O₂ from the burning material and blanket the combustible material.

e. D. C. P. extinguisher- It can be used on C, D and E class of fire. The most common extinguishing agent is sodium bicarbonate or plain baking soda. The extinguisher is charged with the dry chemical and a small tank of CO₂ gas. The CO₂ gas exerts pressure on dry chemical and forces it out of a nozzle directly to the fire. The powder smother the fire and the heat from the fire breaks down the chemical which releases CO₂ gas on a large scale which helps in extinguishing the fire.

Stationary fire fighting system a. Automatic sprinklers-It is generally mounted just below the ceiling height with a temperature detector or smoke detector, attached with each sprinkler. The temperature from the fire melts the fusible link on the detector, which opens a water valve. The water is then sprayed on the ceiling and falls on the floor, extinguishing the fire. If the fire area should spread, more sprinklers are automatically opened, thus confining the fire to a small area. The temperature detector can be purchased for different activating temperature.

The high temperature detectors are often used in kitchens. b. Fire Hose System-It is a semi portable system. In this system the fire hose box is permanently located but the flexible hose can be moved to various distances throughout the building. The hose used to fight fire within a building should be of linen type. The linen allows some water seepage through it which will prevent its burning when in use. HANDLING EMERGENCY SITUATIONS Apart from fire and bomb threat etc. the front office staff at some point of time have to handle a lot of unusual situations also.

Some such situations may be death and illness of guests, theft in hotels etc and many others. 1) Death of a guest in the hotel : ? Once the information comes to the front desk it should directly be reported to the front office manager. ? The front office manager will then report it to the GM or resident manager ? The security manager should also be informed immediately ? The police is informed and the hotel doctor is summoned who will check and confirm the death ? Meanwhile the hotel will locate the residential address of the deceased and will inform the relatives. Once the police complete all formalities and activities and gives the permission, the dead body is fully

covered and then removed from the room on a stretcher. For this purpose the service elevator and not the guest elevator is used ? A death certificate is obtained from the doctor ? A report should be prepared as to who informed of the death, time, room number and date of death. In case there is any luggage of the deceased in the room a list should be prepared and the luggage should be kept in the luggage room and the person performing this activity should sign this report ? The guest room is locked and sealed. After obtaining clearance from the police the room is opened and thoroughly disinfected and spring cleaned and only after permission of the police and subsequent permission of the GM or resident manager the room should be sold. Some important facts to be kept in mind are: ? Donot enter the room alone always take the lobby manager and security officer with you ? In case you are aware that the deceased was under the treatment of a specific doctor, the same should be called instead of the hotel doctor. His physician will also be helpful in knowing and notifying the incident to the relatives and people known to him ?

Donot disturb the body or touch anything before the arrival of the police as this may be a murder or suicide case. 2) Handling accident cases: • A knowledge of first aid would come very handy in such situations. In general the following points should be taken care of : • Remove the person who has met with accident from the site of accident {as early as possible and take him to a more comfortable area, use a stretcher in case the need be} • Call the doctor and if possible give him the details of accident and gravity of the accident. Take someone along with you to the site of the accident as you may need help • Keep alert you must serve the victim immediately by

providing first aid • Try to protect your establishment from any false allegations Prepare a full report of the whole accident giving details of the date and time who reported the incident, room no. , site of the accident etc. Also make your comments as to the reason of the accident and how could it have been prevented and what action is to be taken to avoid the same in the future.

The accident book: - An accident book is usually maintained in all organizations and the receptionist should record all details of accidents which have occurred to employees whilst carrying out their daily activities. - The book must be kept in a place easily accessible by any injured person or a person bona fide - Particulars of an accident may be entered here in either by the injured person himself or by a person acting on his behalf - The accident book when filled up should be preserved for a period of three years after the date of the last entry - Every employer is required to take steps to investigate the circumstances of the accident recorded and if there happens to be any discrepancy between the circumstances found by him and the entry made, he is required to record the circumstances so found. 3) Situation of Theft: Theft is divided into four categories: I. Theft by employees of the hotel can be avoided by: - Work business and personal references should be checked before the employee is hired. A detailed record of all employees who enter the guest room such as chamber maids bellboys room boys maintenance etc - All hotel keys should be returned to the department concerned and no employee should be allowed to take keys out of the hotel's premises. II. Damage of hotel property by the guest can be avoided by: - The hotel staff should identify the main cause for the damage. - If the

damage is appears to be done intentionally the hotel can ask the guest to pay compensation for the same. For this it is necessary that the front desk is well versed with the cost of the damaged item.

III. Theft of hotel property by the guest: Can be avoided by taking the following steps: - Installing automatic locks on the guest room doors - Appointing a security officer who would walk and take rounds at regular intervals - Inform guests to use the safe vault of the hotel and not to keep valuables in the guest room - Keep a watch on walk in as their likelihood of being a thief is more as compared to a guest who has undergone a process of making a reservation in the hotel - Avoid giving room numbers of resident guests to visitors or over the telephone callers. In case the guest loses his key and asks housekeeping to open the room door for them, HK should direct them to front desk - Master key should be kept under strict supervision and control Theft by outside visitors can be avoided by: - being aware of suspicious persons - regular and irregular schedule of vigil and rounds - Stagger lunch and rest periods of employees so as to keep one person on duty on each floor at all times - Instruct the telephone operator not to connect calls to the guest room incase the request is made by the caller by room number.

The receptionist should insist on knowing the name of the guest who the caller wishes to speak to. - Guest should be informed to keep the balcony door closed to avoid anyone entering the rooms from the balcony - Closed circuit televisions should be used 4) Situation of illness and epidemics: - The receptionist may be called for assistance during sickness of a guest. - Patient should be advised to consult the house physician but in case the guest has

his own physician the same should be called. Housekeeping needs to be notified about the sickness and instructions if any - If the case of serious sickness, the guest should be moved to a nursing home - During epidemics all precautionary measures especially in food and beverage service area should be followed

5) Handling a drunk guest : - The guest should be removed from the lobby as early as possible but being careful not to irritate/offend him. - Preferably taken to the back office or to his room. - If he behaves unruly, the hotel security must be called.

Safe deposit facility in the hotel for security of guests' valuables: - It is the responsibility of management to develop and maintain proper safe deposit procedures for its property. - If this facility is available for guests, notices regarding it should be put up in various conspicuous/noticeable places in the hotel and also should be mentioned to the guest. - Safe deposit boxes should be located in an area, in vicinity of the front desk and which has limited access.

Unauthorized guests or personnel should not be permitted inside the area. - Front office staff should be well-versed with the procedures regarding safe deposit boxes. - Strict control should apply to the storage and issue of safe deposit keys. - At any point of time there should be only one key issued for each safe even if more than one person is using the safe. - Two keys are required to open a safe deposit box: one being the guest's key and the other being the control key/guard key put in by the cashier/safe deposit attendant. After the verification of the identity of the guest, the safe deposit attendant/cashier should accompany the guest to the safe deposit area where in clear sight should make use of the control key and the guest's key

to open the safe. Sometimes the hotel may not be able to meet the demand for individual safe box; in that case a large box containing the belongings of more than one guest is used. Each guest's belongings are put in an envelope which is sealed. The key to this box is stored in a secure place and a log is maintained which records an entry each time the key is used to open the box