

GUIDANCE ON SAFETY AND SECURITY

Keep hotel guests and employees safe by following these basic rules

Q *We are evaluating our safety and security standards at our hotel? Can you provide any guidance or advice on practical applications to keep our employees and guests safe?*

A With the start of the New Year, many property managers are evaluating their policies. The HFTP Research Institute has recently received several requests for sample policies such as accounting standards, electronic communications, and now safety and security. Safety and security issues need to be thoroughly addressed at lodging properties to protect both guests and employees. During the holidays there always seems to be an increase in crime and a heightened sense of awareness from customers. This Q&A will highlight guidelines to help keep internal and external hotel guests safe. These guidelines are important for everyone to know and not only apply at hotels, but are useful in everyday situations.

Safety Guidelines for Hotel Guests

The following are generic guidelines for individuals to follow while checking in and staying at a hotel as outlined by the Springfield Missouri Police Department. Most people are probably aware of many of these suggestions, but hopefully you will take away something new to use for your own personal safety or to implement at your property for the safety of your guests.

Arriving at a Hotel

- Park your vehicle in a well-lit area close to the lobby where you can see your vehicle.
- Before getting out of your car, check your surroundings and look for any suspicious looking people.
- Store valuables out of sight and lock your vehicle.
- If you have children in your vehicle, bring them in with you even if you will only be gone for a brief period.



Checking In

- Make reservations ahead of time to avoid being stuck without a reservation.
- Register using your business address.
- Women traveling alone can register with their first initial and last name.
- Request a room on an upper floor located away from a fire escape.

When Arriving at Your Room

- Store valuable items in a hotel safe.
- Don't enter your room if someone suspicious is loitering in the hallway.
- Be sure the locks on your door are operating properly.
- Familiarize yourself with the closest fire evacuation route.
- Make sure you know how to use the phone in your room to dial out to 911.
- Always use the "peep hole" to identify visitors to your room and do not open the door to strangers.
- Parents should run through safety measures with their children when checking into a hotel.

Going Out

- Hang the "Do Not Disturb" sign on the door and leave a light, radio or television on when leaving.
- Don't enter an elevator if someone inside seems suspicious.
- Ask the front desk for a safe place to eat, shop or jog in the area.

Profiles and Trends

There are two basic types of crimes committed at hotel properties: hotel burglaries and hotel room invasions. Hotel room burglaries typically occur during the day when rooms are unoccupied. The criminal will scout the hotel looking for the right opportunity to break into a room. Those individuals committing room burglaries typically avoid confrontation and will flee when discovered. The easiest way to combat this type of crime is to have good security measures in place such as good building design, access control, strong locks, strong doors and alert hotel staff (McGoey, 2012).

The second type of crime is hotel room invasions. These criminals work at night when rooms tend to be occupied and do not mind confrontation. Rather than scouting for an unoccupied room, those committing room invasions will scout guests looking for those with a fancy car, nice jewelry, elderly individuals or women (McGoey, 2012). The most common mode of entry for this type of crime is through the guestroom door or maybe even a patio. The criminal will often impersonate hotel staff asking for access to the room for housekeeping purposes, security purposes, or to simply deliver flowers or room service. Another mode of entry is to follow someone to their room from the lobby.

Hotel Security Measures

The following are guidelines that hotels can follow to make their properties safe for guests and employees. Keep in mind, these are just some general guidelines, and do not cover all the measures which should be taken to ensure safety. These guidelines are published in an article by the Portland Police Department.

- Solid core doors for each guestroom.
- Install strong locks with reinforced strike plates.
- Install outdoor lighting and remove “hiding places.”
- Control traffic flow and access.
- Control and monitor building entrances.
- Keep the exterior looking clean and fresh.
- Repair vandalism.
- Ask for two pieces of I.D. from each adult.
- Visually check, and then record, license plate numbers of guest vehicles.

Further Information

You can find further information on hotel security at the following resources.

Crime Doctor

Hotel Motel Security: Safety Advice for Travelers

The web site, crimedoctor.com, offers several articles on security at lodging properties. Look in the “hotel/motel security” section to find safety advice for travelers. Other articles on the site include: “Hotel Motel Room Invasion, Hotel Security ... as an Amenity, and Family Security at Hotels and Motels.”

Participate Now!

HFTP Compensation and Benefits Survey

Survey Deadline:
March 5, 2012

It is time again to gather information for the biennial *HFTP Compensation and Benefits Survey*. Your participation is very important in order for HFTP to gather accurate data to be segmented by industry, geographic region and property size.

Survey Link:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8NYLTQT>

If you have any questions, please contact Tanya Venegas at hftp@hrm.uh.edu.

Loss Prevention Management Bulletin

The *Loss Prevention Management Bulletin* is an excellent resource for further information on safety and security topics, and can be found on the *Hospitality Lawyer* web site. Simply visit www.hospitalitylawyer.com and click on the tab for “Legal, Safety & Security Libraries.” Then click on the “Safety & Security Library” link. For many years the America Hotel & Lodging Association sponsored this newsletter which covers various topics such as conservation and energy, ergonomics, hotel fire safety, OSHA, hotel security and liability, and hotel work safety.

A Guide to Crime Prevention in Overnight Lodging

This article, provided by the Portland Police Department at www.portlandonline.com, describes how hoteliers can prevent crime at their properties. The article discusses topics such as: environmental design, visibility and access, warning signs, appearance and maintenance, etc. ■

Sources

- Springfield Missouri Police Department. *Hotel/Motel Safety*. Retrieved January 18, 2012 from www.springfieldmo.gov.
- McGoey, Chris E. (2012). *Hotel Security: Room Invasion Robber*. Retrieved January 18, 2012 from <http://www.crimedoctor.com/hotelinvasion.htm>.
- Portland Police Bureau. (2012). *A Guide to Crime Prevention in Overnight Lodging*. Retrieved January 18, 2012 from <http://www.portlandonline.com/Police/index.cfm?a=31556&c=29869>.

Send your research request to hftp@hrm.uh.edu. Note that the Research Institute can't answer every question. Some specific or proprietary questions are too difficult to answer.