January 2008

CHECK-IN

with American Hotel Register Company

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✔ A study by Travelodge found there have been more than 400 cases of **nude sleepwalkers** in the past year, almost all involving men. Conducted in 310 Travelodge hotels, the study found that sleepwalkers wander all over the building. In fact, a number had walked to the front desk and asked for a newspaper or to check out! Sleep experts blame stress, alcohol abuse, lack of sleep, and injuries. Advice to hotel workers on the night shift includes keeping a supply of towels at the front desk to help preserve a guest's dignity.

✔ Another study, this one by the University of Virginia, found that **more than one-third of the things people commonly touch in hotel rooms, such as pens, doorknobs, TV remotes, light switches, were infected with a virus.** Glassware in guest rooms was also unsanitary due to improper cleaning. Guests are advised to wash the glassware, or even better, bring their own!

✔ Hotel chains are leading the way to a greener world. The **Hilton New York** completed the rigging of a Pure Cell 202 state-of-the-art fuel-efficient power and hot water generating system as part of its global green program. Hilton's bed linen and towel initiative saves more than 12 million gallons of fresh water a day.

The **InterContinental Chicago** installed a motion detection system that conserves lighting and air-conditioning energy when guest rooms aren't occupied. Table scraps and leftover food go to composting sites.

✔ *Working Mother* magazine named **Marriott International to its list of 100 Best Companies for Working Mothers.** The chain was recognized for its childcare offerings, flexible work options, diversity initiatives, and English-language training program. Marriott has been named to this list 16 times, earning the company a place in the Working Mother's Hall of Fame. Marriott was also recognized as an excellent workplace by *BusinessWeek*.

On The Road...

To amenitize…or not to amenitize. Hamlet pondered, but today's hotel shouldn't. The trick is to come up with something unique to your property's situation. Here are some successful ideas.

Hyatt Hotels Corp. announced a "StayFit at Hyatt" major fitness initiative. Hotel guests asked for upgraded, on-site fitness centers and in-room options; they don't want to leave the hotel.

In the same vein, **aloft hotels** wants its fitness centers to be an energizing, uplifting experience for guests, so fitness centers will feature a glass wall to bring natural light into the room. In addition, treadmills will have individual television and sound systems, allowing guests to select their own entertainment as they exercise.

Personalized services, including 24-hour butlers, private city tours, shopping advisors, limousine transfers from airports, paté for pets and more are what guests want. "Decadence is in," says Jennifer Oberstein of the **Ritz-Carlton's New York hotels.**

Hotel lobbies can be great places to people-watch, lounge, and meet-and-greet. Now, **Marriott hoteliers** are creating "lobby great rooms" that feature a check-in area, a social-business zone, and a day/night bar with morning coffee and pastries and a nightly open bar.

Many hotel companies believe they must slash waste and pollution because it makes both sound economic and public relations sense. **Kimpton Hotels,** a boutique group of 42 properties, launched an EarthCare program with a mission "to deliver a premium guest experience through non-intrusive, high-quality, eco-friendly products and services." This means the hotel group uses recycled paper and soy-based inks, installs water-saving faucets, showerheads, and toilets, and uses energy-saving lighting. In addition, guests will find organic coffee and tea at Kimpton's Monaco Hotel in Chicago. Cards explain the linen-changing and towel re-use options, and there's a tasteful maroon recycling bin in each room.

Pure Room technology at three **Wyndham Hotels** sanitizes every surface and fabric, and purifies air and water to provide maximum guest comfort. Individualized climate controls and carbon dioxide sensors are being installed.

StudyLogic, a New York research firm, surveyed 1,041 people with a minimum of three hotel stays over the last 12 months and found that 70 percent open a new mini-bottle of shampoo and conditioner each time they shower on the road. So when the new **Westin Element Hotel** in Lexington, MA, opens next year, shampoo dispensers will replace those multiple plastic mini-bottles. Water-saving devices will conserve about 4,358 gallons of water per room each year, compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) will cut energy use by 75 percent, and eco-friendly materials will be used throughout the hotel.

The J.D. Power and Associates 2007 North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction Index Study found that no matter what the age group, a complimentary breakfast is the most important amenity. Next is high-speed and wireless Internet access, then a TV set with a screen larger than 27 inches. The majority of hotel guests want a complete non-smoking environment, and three out of four guests will participate in linen and towel re-use programs. However, if hotels want to please guests, it is best to invest in the people who operate the property. There is a strong correlation between hotel staff performance and overall hotel satisfaction.

Reader Responses Reader Responses

Last issue's question on what to do with used soaps and amenities brought in some suggestions. **Jane Lovett, Peaches Bed and Breakfast, Grand Rapids, MI,** writes: "We always recycle as much guest trash as possible…plastic bottles and newspapers whenever we can, and anything else we can identify. We also can recycle soaps here (Grand Rapids) because our local Salvation Army shelter will take them. Thanks for the suggestions about asking guests to participate…we'll definitely try to engage them in recycling more by adding a 'green' page to our information book in the rooms. I'd be delighted if they merely turned off their air conditioners and lights when they left the room for the day!"

Betsy LeClair, Cool City Motel, Two Rivers, WI, offers some ideas for properties that cannot donate their soaps. "I own a small 'Mom and Pop' motel, and I understand this is not a solution for large chains, but I thought I would tell you what I do with my [used] soap. I have made small 'pouches' out of wash cloths (when one gets a hole in it, I can use half of it for a pouch - recycle those also). I used to put Velcro® on the pouch to hold the soap in, but now I just make a tri-fold so that the pocket of soap is tucked inside. I put several small pieces in, and as they get wet and used, they kind of mush together and the wash pouch always has soap coming out of it. These are only for my family so I never use up all the soap we have, but the pouches are good for using small and broken pieces of soap as well. I did ask a doctor once about bacteria, but he said they do not live long on something like soap, so it was nothing to worry about.

"I have had Girl Scouts take nice-size soaps and wrap them with fabric and a bow. Great for a basket or to use in a decorative scene where tiny presents might be needed. They smell nice, too!"

The subject of Work/Life Balance in Employee Retention in our July HR News column caught the attention of **Mareea Karim, General Manager, La Quinta Inn & Suites, Muskogee, OK.** She writes: "Employee retention has been my greatest challenge in the year that I have been managing at my property. The long working days and, at times, nights can be physically, as well as mentally exhausting. I am happy to report that in the last three months I have lost not one employee.

"Housekeepers can become easily bored with their repetitious duties. I have learned to hire employees who have a desire to take on new challenges. Every morning we have a huddle for communication; this is where I learn about who they are and their attitude toward their job. As a result, I have a housekeeper who fills in as a breakfast hostess when needed and is training at the front desk. There are several who alternate days doing the laundry. We have three housekeepers who alternate inspecting rooms as well, one of which fills in as relief night auditor.

"The housekeepers are taking ownership of their duties and working as a team. We provide lunch every Sunday to show our appreciation. The number of complaints has dropped tremendously and my turnover, well let me say that I sleep better at night!

"Front desk was extremely challenging. To avoid being called upon every time someone called in or didn't show up, I had to hire employees who were very flexible. 'Can work any shift' is the attitude I looked for when interviewing. I also have employees who work part-time. I learned to be flexible with them; this allows them to continue going to school, stay home with their children more, or simply take this employment as a second job. It has worked great, and I have someone to call when another employee is out.

"The key is to be considerate of your employees' needs: Care about who they are as a person, and acknowledge what they have to offer, and work around their weakness while training them to strive for perfection. Cheers for my staff!"

And finally, **Sandee Harraden, Ivey House Managing Director, Everglades City, FL,** wrote: "We just wanted to share with you that Ivey House is the first Green Lodging in Collier County, and the 47th in Florida." Owners David and Sandee Harraden installed water-efficient faucets, showerheads, and toilets, and implemented a towel and linen re-use program to conserve water. The bed and breakfast also installed energy-efficient lighting and switched to high-efficiency air filters to improve air quality.

The Florida Green Lodging Program is a voluntary state initiative that provides the lodging industry with technical assistance, and encourages hotels and motels to adopt cost-saving green practices that reduce waste and conserve natural resources.

Congratulations to the Harradens of Ivey House! And be sure to read more of our "green" articles in this and future issues of Check-In.

Your thoughts are worth $25! Send them to us! All addresses are printed on the back page. Make sure to include your full name, property name, and address.

What is your property doing to go green? Are you applying for a certification?

What else is on your mind?

We want to know! Tell us by e-mail, snail mail, or fax — you'll find all the addresses on the back page.

Hotel Certification Programs

Dozens of countries, several US states, and a number of industries have their own labeling programs with varying standards. Here are some reputable programs.

Energy Star: A US-based EPA program that rates the energy efficiency of appliances used in businesses. (www.energystar.gov)

Green Globe: Based on stringent guidelines, Green Globe certifies properties in more that 80 countries. (www.greenglobe.org)

Leed: The US Green Building Council certifies buildings that meet standards of energy efficiency, conservation, and community sensitivity. (www.usgbc.org)

Sustainable Tourism Certification Network of the Americas: A joint effort of the Rainforest Alliance and the International Ecotourism Society linking five different green certification programs in the Americas. (www.eco-indextourism.org)

HR news...

Katie Snider
Human Resources Editor

Dress Codes and Grooming Standards

Many employers establish dress codes and grooming standards for their employees. There are a number of factors to take into consideration when establishing these guidelines, such as appropriate clothing (business, business casual, casual), jewelry, footwear, hygiene, facial hair, piercings, and tattoos. These grooming and dress requirements can vary widely depending upon the industry or position the employee holds. For example, bank and health care staff are typically known for their "professional" appearance. Similarly, a sales person may be held to a higher standard of dress and grooming than a laborer.

Dress and grooming requirements typically arise out of legitimate business issues such as safety, customer relations, and employer preference. Employers believe that employees are representatives of the company and their dress and grooming should reflect the image the company wants to project.

Employers may set standards with which the employees must comply while they are at work. Employers may require employees to remove piercings or facial hair, cover up tattoos, or change an extreme hair color, as long as the employer does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or disability. Employees who violate the standards set by the employer may be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge.

Occasionally, employees may request to be exempt from a prescribed dress or grooming standard. If such a request is made, the employer should explore the reason for the request. If the request is based on a physical condition (such as when an employee [who] has undergone foot surgery asks to wear athletic shoes to work) or a sincerely held religious belief (such as requesting to wear a head covering), the employer must accommodate the employee's request unless doing so will create a safety hazard or an undue hardship. Note that the employer need not provide the *specific* accommodation requested by the employee. The employer and employee should discuss possible solutions with the goal of reaching a resolution that works for the employer and accommodates the employee.

Safety concerns may be a consideration when an employer sets employee dress and grooming standards. For employees who work on machinery, it may be advisable to prohibit employees from wearing anything that could get caught in the machinery — long unrestrained hair, jewelry, scarves, or religious head coverings, for example. Other items that may be prohibited for safety reasons in certain environments include open-toe or high-heeled shoes or sandals, and contact lenses.

Employers should review their dress and grooming policies to ensure the policies reflect current practice and are evenhanded in their application. If there is no policy in place and dress and grooming issues have become a problem or may become an issue, it is recommended that policies be established. When dealing with a grooming issue, for example, it is helpful to be able to point to a policy that sets out reasonable expectations. It is important to communicate the contents of the policies to employees, as well as the reasons for the policies and consequences for failing to follow them.

Source: Amy Wangerin, HR Digest, MRA–The Management Association, Inc., September 2006

Maintenance news

Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

What You Should Know About CFLs

"When you weigh the pros and cons of compact fluorescents, the mercury issue is important, but it should not deter anyone from going out and buying them because the benefits far outweigh the potential risks," says Jeff Deyette, an energy analyst with the Union of Concerned Scientists, a Washington-based environmental group (www.ucusa.org).

First, compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) help fight global warming because they use less energy while providing the same amount of light. For example, a spiral CFL saves up to 75 percent in electricity cost in comparison to incandescent bulbs. Less energy use equals less pollution.

According to Energy Star, a program run by the Environmental Protection Agency, if every US home changed out just one incandescent bulb to a CFL, the US would save enough energy to light three million homes, as well as prevent greenhouse gas emissions equal to that of 800,000 cars.

Want to know what kind of impact your lightbulb switch can make? Go to www.asimpleswitch.com.

Second, CFLs last longer, so you don't have to replace them as often. Less energy use equals lower energy bills.

There are many different types of CFLs: spirals, A19s, G25s, and Deco/CCs are just a few. While most CFLs fit in every application, a CFL bulb can be larger than a standard incandescent bulb. Inspect your lamp shade, harp, and socket to ensure that your lamp can accommodate the CFL you're selecting. When choosing a bulb, look at the watt equivalent rather than actual watts to achieve the brightness you desire. Also, read the package and make sure the CFL is made for dimmers, if this is the application you need.

All fluorescent lights contain a small amount of mercury — about 5 milligrams per bulb. In comparison, an older thermometer contains about 500 milligrams of mercury, about 100 CFLs-worth! Plus, using CFLs helps prevent mercury from being released into the air from coal-burning power plants.

In addition, the mercury in CFLs can be recaptured if the bulbs are recycled. Many municipalities offer free recycling service. For more information, go to www.epa.com, check out www.lamprecycle.com, or call 1-800-378-6998 for waste disposal companies in your area. Also, Mercury Disposal Systems, Inc. offers lamp and battery recycling. You can simply order, fill, seal, and return a prepaid container. Your property will then have proof of recycling to show that you are in compliance with state regulations.

2008 Calendar

Trade shows and conventions are a fantastic way to find out what's new and what's happening in the industry. Here are some events scheduled for the coming months.

32nd Hotel, Motel & Restaurant Supply Show of the Southeast
January 29 – 31; Myrtle Beach, SC; www.hmrsss.com

Sixth Annual Hospitality Law Conference
February 11 - 13; Houston, TX; www.hospitalitylawyer.com

Upper Midwest Foodservice & Lodging Show
February 17 - 19; Minneapolis, MN; www.upshowonline.com

14th Twin Cities Food & Wine Experience
February 21 - 24; Minneapolis, MN; www.foodwineshow.com

Nightclub & Bar Convention and Trade Show
February 24 - 27; Las Vegas, NV; www.nightclub.com

International Las Vegas Coffee & Tea Expo
Feb. 24 - 27; Las Vegas, NV; www.internationalcoffeeandteaexpo.com

Semi-Annual CHART Hospitality Training Conference
March 1 - 4; Minneapolis, MN; www.chart.org

34th Annual Ocean City Hotel-Motel-Restaurant Assn. Expo
March 2 - 3, Ocean City, MD; www.hospitalityexpos.com

International Restaurant & Foodservice Show of New York
March 9 - 11; New York, NY; www.internationalrestaurantny.com

Seatrade Cruise Shipping Convention
March 10 - 13; Miami Beach, FL; www.cruiseshipping.net

Quirky Quotes

A hotel isn't like a home, but it's better than being a house guest.
— William Feather

Travelers never think that* they *are the foreigners.
— Mason Cooley

read check-in online at www.americanhotel.com

Check Out

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas are what make the pages of this newsletter interesting and useful to everyone in the hospitality field. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts. Send your responses to:

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Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity.

Check-In is published four times a year by American Hotel Register Company. We hope you've enjoyed this issue. If you need an extra copy, just ask!

Editor: Barbara Sirovatka

Jim Leahy

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Several years ago, while visiting a chain headquarters in New Jersey, I had a long meeting with a buyer who had a degree in philosophy. Her teenage son had had some remarkably frank talks with her about dating, sex, and what's "right" or not. (The intimacy of these talks was something I could never have had with my own mother.)

They talked about his sexual relationships, not in legal or religious terms, but in philosophical concepts. The ultimate criteria the two of them reached was "I am too fine a person to …!"

In other words, in any relationship with a young woman, what sort of person would he choose to be? Would he be a person of honor, character, good manners, and nobility? Or would he speak and act in ways that were crude, unkind, sleazy, or dishonest?

This mother's discussion was quite lengthy, but I sometimes think back to that ultimate statement: "I am too fine a person to …."

We all face issues where friends, tiredness, or other circumstances call us to be less than honorable, moral, or caring. We want to be liked. We want to be seen as smart, interesting, and worldly. We're sometimes pressured to behave badly.

As we go into the world and establish our reputation, people see who we are and what we stand for. They respect us as people of integrity, authority, and authenticity, or they figure that our character leaves a lot to be desired.

Laws and customs put a lot of responsibility on the hospitality industry for the safety and well-being of the traveling public. It is through us that this responsibility is met. We must be people of character and principle. We owe it to those travelers, our owners, and most important, to ourselves.

Be the very best person you can be. Be the person you will be proud to be. Remind yourself, "I am too fine a person to …."

Love, Jim

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