

CHECK-IN

with American Hotel Register Company

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ Several hotels are conducting **no-questions-asked amnesty programs** for the return of hotel items pilfered in the past. Four hundred items came back to the Mission Inn in Riverside, CA, as part of its 30th anniversary as a National Historic Landmark, including seven intricate brass bells taken from the hotel's underground tunnels. The Fairmont Copley Plaza Hotel in Boston threw a party for participants in its amnesty program, which yielded about 200 items. Holiday Inn has conducted Towel Amnesty Days, but Keith McClinsey of the Renaissance Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C., says that towel theft is on the wane; the current most in-demand items are wine glasses etched with the hotel's name. (*See this issue's Reader Response question on the back page!*)

✓ TripAdvisor canvassed more than 2,500 travelers to find out their top traveling concerns. The survey found that 26% of travelers will be more environmentally conscious in their travel decisions in the future; **80% said that cleanliness is a key factor**; and 60% said that terrorism is a consideration when deciding where to go on their next vacation. The cost of fuel influences the travel choice of 36%, and 45% said that the possibility of natural disasters is a consideration when planning a vacation.

✓ Chicago, IL, banned smoking in restaurants, bars, and other public places last January 1, but **the Swissôtel Chicago has decided to ban smoking everywhere**. Plus, it's paying staffers \$10 for each guest they find breaking the rules. General Manager Jack Breisacher says that it really costs \$400 to thoroughly clean a room — two lost revenue days — after just one person lights up one cigarette. So far housekeepers have found about twenty offenders, who have had \$250 added to their bills. But no complaints from smokers — they paid up after puffing away!

Here are some successful ideas from hospitality properties around the US. Perhaps there's an idea you can use too!

Historic Renaissance Hotel, Cleveland, OH, holds a guest mixology contest in the Tavern. Guests create their own cocktails at the bar for others to sample. **Doug Stelnicki** says that the winner of the tastiest drink gets the concoction named after him (or her)!

Jose Alberro let us know that the **Holiday Inn, Port of Miami** organization feels strongly about giving back to the community. They developed a program for employees who would like to voluntarily participate in this effort. Four to five volunteers search within the greater Miami area for organizations in need of help. Once an organization is chosen, the volunteers present ideas for helping to the owners, management, and employees. This last Thanksgiving, the hotel donated food and money to a

nursing home, and staff members volunteered to serve food to the elderly patients.

At Christmas time, employees sponsored a toy drive for an after-school program for under-privileged kids and participated in the program's Christmas celebrations. Executive

Housekeeper Paula Ferrer and Chief Engineer Carlos Abud both said they feel the experience they gained through these events is indispensable. Now both are involved, aside from the employee program, with various charities.

Speaking of helping hands, **Jack Pickersell, General Manager, Quality Inn, Montgomeryville, PA**, was "bailed out of jail" by Joe Gimaro, Jr., owner of the **Comfort Inn** just down the street. **Maureen Elwood** let us know that thankfully, Jack is still happily employed, and the jail sentence turned out to be a stunt for the annual muscular dystrophy charity drive.



✿ Going Green Simply ✿

"Going green" can be very confusing, to say the least, and also sounds like a lot of work. Here are six tips to make going green easier, for property staff at work and at home.

- ✿ Switch to eco doggie bags that biodegrade in the landfill, so Rover's leavings won't be forever preserved!
- ✿ You've heard this before: Switch to compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). By just switching five of your most used incandescent bulbs to CFLs, you can save \$25 to \$65 a year in energy costs.
- ✿ Use the garbage disposal. It's greener to feed the disposal than it is to put food waste in a plastic bag and send it to the landfill. The sanitary district will treat it and turn it into fertilizer.
- ✿ Recycle those newspapers. Every ton of paper that gets recycled saves the equivalent of 17 trees, saves enough energy to power an average home for six months, saves 7,000 gallons of water, and keeps 60 pounds of pollutants out of the air.
- ✿ Fix the leaky toilet fast. It can waste 200 gallons of water a day. Check for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If you have a leak, color will appear in the bowl within 15 minutes. It is estimated that two out of every ten toilets in the US leak.
- ✿ Keep recycling aluminum cans. Recycling just one can saves enough energy to run a television or operate a computer for three hours.

Look for more tips in our next issue!

Reader Responses

CORRECTION: In our last issue, as part of the Maintenance News, we printed an incorrect website address for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The correct website is www.epa.gov. Our thanks go to alert reader **Julie Bontrager, Crooked Creek Christian Camp, Washington, IA**, for pointing this out.

A previous question on what to do with used soaps and amenities brought in some suggestions we printed in our last issue, and here's another.

Erin Skinner, CLM, General Manager, AmericInn of Rhinelander, Rhinelander, WI, writes: "The first hotel I managed donated used soap to a shelter in our area, and they were very appreciative of it. Something to know about this is that they don't just go around handing out half-used soap to poor people. If you melt down the soap and add a little water to it, you can make it into very usable hand soap that can be pumped out of a dispenser. You can even purchase little machines for doing this at craft stores."

What's on your mind? 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.

Maintenance news



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Worker Protection

Worker protection can mean many things to many people. In the hospitality industry, we work with a variety of products that require special care. Thankfully, there continue to be product improvements to make everyday duties around the property safer, but there will always be a need for the safety items to help protect workers.

Recently I received a note from a property manager in Tennessee who accidentally got some hydrochloric acid in his eye as he was re-routing chemical lines in the pool's pump room. While he was able to utilize a nearby eyewash station, he may still end up with some permanent damage to his tear ducts. He asked me to remind you, our readers, of the importance of wearing proper eye protection. Safety glasses and goggles can offer basic protection for everyday duties, from maintenance work to housekeeping.

If you are working with equipment that is loud and noisy, consider wearing earplugs. While the effects of the exposure may not seem like much at the

time, there can be a cumulative effect that causes hearing loss over time.

If you are exposed to dust, there are many different types and styles of dust masks available to lessen the effects of this as well.

Hand protection is also important. Be sure to wear the proper gloves for the tasks you are performing. Housekeepers use a variety of chemicals throughout the course of a day, some of which can be harsh. Always read and follow label instructions. Using too much of a chemical can be dangerous, and using too little can be ineffective.

Kneeling to clean floors and baths can be hard on the knees. While many maintenance people use knee pads regularly, more and more housekeepers are discovering the benefits of knee pads as well.

Back support belts can help reduce strain and injury. A properly fitting back support can prove beneficial for many people as they perform everyday tasks around your property.

There are many different types, styles, and sizes of these safety-related products available. When choosing a product, be sure that it is the correct one for the job at hand and that it fits properly. No one expects to have an accident, but taking the proper precautions and wearing the correct equipment can lessen the consequences for everyone.

See this issue's Reader Response question on the back page!

Tips on Charitable Giving

Are you or your property thinking of getting involved with a charitable organization, as some of the properties mentioned in our front page *On the Road* column have done?

Here are some tips from the Better Business Bureau designed to help donors make smart as well as beneficial giving decisions. When you choose to support a charitable organization through your time and effort or by donating money, carefully evaluate charitable requests to avoid being taken by deceptive and fraudulent appeals. Remember to GIVE with your HEAD as well as your HEART.

✓ Whether you're approached to give money in person, by phone, or through the mail, don't feel pressured to give money on the spot.

Remember that a charity that can use your money today will welcome it just as much tomorrow.

- ✓ Watch out for emotional appeals that bring tears to your eyes, but tell you nothing about how the charity will use your donation. Appeals should clearly identify the charity's program activities.
- ✓ If you're unfamiliar with an organization, don't hesitate to ask for enough information to make an informed giving decision. Most charities will be happy to provide you with written information about their programs and finances.

If you find yourself short on money, but still in the giving spirit, you may

want to consider alternative ways to support your favorite cause.

- ✓ Do volunteer work for your favorite organization. Many charities need your time and talents just as much as they need your money.
- ✓ Organize an effort in your neighborhood, office, or carpool to support a charity. By pooling your contributions with those of your neighbors or co-workers, you can make a more sizeable donation.
- ✓ Donate food items, such as canned goods, or assist with organized food drives in your neighborhood, church, or community. To find out where help is needed most, contact social service agencies in your area.



Katie Snider
Human Resources
Editor

Diploma Mills — A Danger to Employers

A diploma mill is defined as an institute of higher education operating without the supervision of a state or professional agency, which grants worthless diplomas, due to fraud or lack of standards.

Typically, diploma mills have austere names such as Columbia State, Loyola State, or Hamilton University. They provide applicants with post-secondary diplomas and official looking transcripts in exchange for a fee. In some cases, diploma mills advertise college credits for “life experience,” perhaps requiring the applicant to write a paper detailing this experience. That paper, along with a fee often in the thousands of dollars, may be all it takes to obtain a bachelor’s or master’s degree, a Ph.D., or an M.D.

According to a 2005 article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*,

diploma mills generate a half-billion dollars annually for their operators. The probability is growing that a job applicant may not have the stated degree.

The growth of the Internet has exacerbated the problem, making diploma mills more prolific and taking advantage of the upswing in legitimate distance learning institutions to blur the boundaries. Diploma mills have advertised in such reputable publications as *USA Today*, *Forbes*, and *The Economist*, giving them an air of credibility. To complicate things further, some diploma mills have created false accrediting agencies.

So, how should a company go about protecting itself from hiring a candidate for employment who has not earned the degree the individual claims to have?

- ✓ Always conduct a reference check. Do not accept transcripts or a copy of a diploma from the candidate; instead opt to check with the school.
- ✓ Consider changing the wording on your employment application to read “Accredited College” instead of just “College” when asking for academic information. Ask for years of enrollment or

number of years attended.

- ✓ Do not accept a resume in place of a completed application. A diploma mill “grad” providing the name of the school, degree earned, and date of graduation on a resume could be providing truthful information.

An employer seeking graduates only from accredited schools will find that an application requiring dates of enrollment at an accredited college or university is a valuable hiring tool. Moreover, inaccurate information that might disqualify the candidate is often not included on a resume but is revealed on an application.

- ✓ Take advantage of the U.S. Department of Education’s website at <http://ope.ed.gov/accreditation> to conduct an online search of post-secondary schools that have been granted accreditation by recognized accrediting agencies.

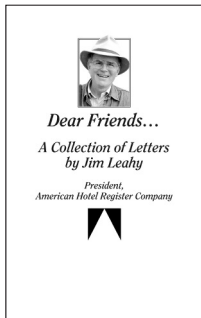
Candidates’ use of diploma mills is increasing. Take the time to protect your organization by verifying the education information provided by all final job candidates.

Source: Peggy Katz, HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., September 2006

Letters from the President

Absolute last chance!

Jim Leahy has written a letter for each issue of the Check-In hospitality customer newsletter. Because we’ve received so many favorable responses to



Jim’s “Letter from the President” column, we thought that readers might enjoy the entire collection, dated from 1999 through 2005.

We are offering this book at cost to our friends and customers.

If you would like a copy of *Dear Friends... A Collection of Letters by Jim Leahy*, please send a check for \$5, along with your name and address to:

American Hotel Register Company
Attention: Check-In
100 South Milwaukee Ave.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061

Keeping Crowds Under Control

Portable crowd control posts function as visual barriers and guidance systems. They are easy to configure, reconfigure, relocate, and store away when not needed. Posts should have wide, heavyweight bases for stability. However, like other portable objects, posts can topple over if used improperly.

Portable posts and ropes or retractable belts are not intended to be pulled, pushed, leaned on, or sat upon. Most people understand this safety issue, but very young children, for example, may not. If not properly supervised, they may play with a rope, belt, or post, causing it to topple over and perhaps cause accidental injury.

If your property hosts many guests with very young children who may not be properly supervised, you may wish to choose an alternative guidance system.

Some alternatives include:

1. Horizontal Tubes, Beams, and Panels: Unlike posts, these cannot be pulled over with direct downward pressure.

2. Removable Posts: These slide into sockets that are permanently mounted in the floor. They can be easily removed and stored as situations demand. They are most appropriate for areas with established traffic patterns.
3. Fixed Posts and Railings: Permanently affixed to the floor, these cannot be moved. They are also best used in areas with established traffic patterns.

Note that both the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) regulations (ADA/UFAS 4.4.1) regarding “protruding objects” require the use of compliant stanchions or railings, in which the lowest tape, rope, or rail must not exceed a height of 27” from the floor when measured 12” or more away from the vertical post surface. This is to ensure that visually impaired people who employ a cane or guide animal can detect the protruding object without a collision.

Source: Lawrence Metal Products, Inc.

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.

HSMIA Affordable Meetings Mid America

April 9 – 10; Chicago, IL; www.affordablemeetings.com

International Franchise Expo

April 11 – 13; Washington, D.C.; www.ifeinfo.com

Resort Management Conference

April 16 – 18; San Diego, CA; www.amg-inc.com/HSMIA

Food Marketing Institute (FMI) Show

May 4 – 7; Las Vegas, NV; www.fmi.org

National Restaurant Association Show (NRA)

May 17 – 20; Chicago, IL; www.restaurant.org/show

2008 Global Spa Summit

May 18 – 20; New York, NY; www.globalspasummit.org

Green West Expo & Conference 2008

May 20 – 22; Los Angeles, CA; www.GreenWestExpo.com

30th Annual NYU Hospitality Industry Investment Conference

June 1 – 3; New York, NY; www.scps.nyu.edu/index.jsp

AH&LA Summer Summit

June 9 – 12; Oklahoma City, OK; www.ahla.com/conventions

HOTEC Design 2008

June 12 – 15; Braselton, GA; www.hotecna.com

**What popular items go missing from your property? Do you ever get them back?
We want to know; all contact info is below!**

Quirky Quote

I travel a lot; I hate having my life disrupted by routine.

— Caskie Stinnett

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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Attention: Check-In
100 South Milwaukee Ave.
Vernon Hills, IL 60061

e-mail: check-in@americanhotel.com
or Fax: 847-743-1083

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,

One of the greatest gifts that we can give to our guests is to be happy and share our happiness with them. It's amazing to me how hard some people work to "be happy" and how often their striving doesn't seem to bring happiness.

Statistics show that happy people will earn more money, be healthier, have more friends, live longer, and enjoy better marriages than unhappy people.

A few thoughts about becoming a happier person:

♥ Be willing to laugh out loud! Life can be silly, absurd, and downright funny. Be open to its humor.

♥ Be an optimist! Hope in the future! The things we fear the most almost never happen.

♥ Believe in yourself! When you think how rough your life is, listen to others who have lived truly difficult lives.

♥ Avoid people who are unpleasant, critical, and habitually angry! They bring you down and are poisonous to your spirit.

♥ Do kind and caring things for others, even when you don't have to, and even when you'll get nothing in return. Do those things every day, and with compassion. Know that life is about love and service to others.

♥ Watch shows and read things that will make you laugh!

♥ Live in the moment! Spend less time remembering unhappiness or worrying about the future. Be aware of the sounds, the people, and the beauty around you.

♥ Make a list of the things that happen which make you happy! You'll find far more than you expect. Too often we focus on misunderstandings and mistakes.

♥ Be aware of others! Truly listen to them. Show interest in them. Laugh with them; sympathize with them. "Hear" their feelings in their tone of voice. Ask about those feelings and express concern, admiration, or whatever is appropriate. Don't let strangers be strangers.

And finally — Smile! Laugh! Celebrate life!

Love,

 **american**
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