

Protection of Hospitality Employees

Brian Bergquist*

Professor, School of Hospitality Leadership, University of Wisconsin-Stout, USA

How much should be done to protect hospitality employees from harm in the workplace? In every argument there is always two sides to the story. The first being hospitality operations are not doing enough to protect their employees. The second being, hospitality operations spend large amounts of training and infrastructure dollars to protect employees from harm in the workplace.

Part of the problem is that hospitality operations do not admit that security and safety are concerns. Paul Moxness [1] VP for corporate safety and security at The Rezidor Hotel Group, a Brussels-based hotel management company stated "Security still is something of a taboo in the global hotel industry." Hawley [2] reported Housekeepers often feel insecure as they enter guest rooms to clean. For one employee it was a naked man who fondled himself while she entered the room, another was attacked by dogs. If the guest complained management would often side with the guest and try to appease the guest with discounts or other amenities. This can significantly impact the working relationship between management and employees. In the face of these issues hospitality operators need to believe in their employees. In the wake of such attacks many operations have look to adopt new policies to protect their staff. One recommendation is to have employees involved in the identification and reduction of safety and risk issues. Hospitality operators need to review current policy, procedure and practices to ensure safe working environments. In addition Haley suggested [3] "A hotel operator should also perform an inventory of the unique security issues presented by its hotel."

The other side of the stories is the increased importance of protecting hospitality employees. The safety and safe working environments are of utmost concern for the hospitality operator especially with high profile news stories such as the attacks in New York, but it comes with a cost. For example hospitality operators spend millions on signage, access control, key control, panic buttons, employees training, in house communication for the protection of their employees. The cost of employee harm and injury as well as safety and security features dramatically affect the bottom line. All of these costs will significantly affect profitability and every effort needs to be taken to understand and control costs. CompMonitor [4] stated "To control these cost, the employer needs take an overall cost of risk approach to employee safety and not just pay attention to workers comp premiums."

There are other risks associated with the work place that operator need to be concerned with, CompMonitor [4] stated the top two by dollar amount were falls of several kinds (US\$18.9 Billion) and overexertion (lifting, pulling US\$12.7 Billion) as identified by Liberty Mutual Insurance company. On average there are US\$52 Billion spent on workers compensation claims for disabled workers and this is only the direct workers compensation costs in the United States, then operators have the indirect costs of business disruption, employee coverage, limited or light duty to name a few. Thus, the importance of protecting employees from harm in the workplace takes on added importance. According to the CDC hand injuries alone accounted for US\$500 Million in lost time, settlements and claims. Companies need to take safety and security seriously and look at the conceptual picture of making their operations safe and secure both from an operational and cost benefit approach. Their employees are one of their greatest

assets. Rowe [5] stated "When you think about the other costs - the business disruption for the company, the personal disruption for the affected individual and their family - it is easy to see why employee safety is so important and why risk management is such a rewarding investment."

Hospitality operations can train and empower employees to be able to identify and reduce safety and security risks. Managers can communicate and enforce policy and procedures to decrease harms and injuries to their employees. Operators can log or track incidents to identify areas of weakness. Operators can develop and instill a culture of safety and risk awareness within their operations. Employees also need to understand the importance of their own actions and be aware of the dangers in the workplace and what they can do to protect themselves and their employees from harm and loss. Hill [6] stated "Ultimately, through a proactive and thoughtful approach to workplace safety, businesses can simultaneously keep their most important assets-their employees-safe."

References

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*Corresponding author: Brian Bergquist, PhD, Professor, School of Hospitality Leadership, University of Wisconsin-Stout, USA, Tel: 715-232-2290, E-mail: bergquistb@uwstout.edu

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