



Housekeeping

by Elizabeth Kozlowski

Top ten problem areas to watch for when housemen service guest floors

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Within the housekeeping department, the room attendants play a critical role in the guest experience. The cleanliness and organization of the guestroom gives that special welcoming touch to the room, enabling the guests to feel at home. But this welcoming environment is not the result of the sole effort of the room attendants alone.

The floor housemen, working alongside the room attendants, in fact complement their work to give completion to the presentation of the whole guest floor. While room attendants focus their efforts inside the guestrooms, the housemen's attentions are directed at the exterior: hallway carpets, walls, doors, fixtures, and the service landings. Their role is crucial to the overall feel of the entire guest floor and their maintenance of the corridors gives guests that good first impression before they even arrive at room number "what was it again?" or "which way is it?"

This is the second of a series of articles highlighting the most commonly observed deficiencies among the different positions of the housekeeping team. Read on to discover the top ten problem areas where floor housemen fail to meet standards:

Pictured below: Unsightly marks and scuffs in baseboards in guest halls must be removed. This is typically a responsibility for housemen.



10) *Light fixtures* - If there are any light fixtures within reach, one must check to make sure the housemen are dusting them. Many housemen believe that dusting is a room attendant's job, but not in the hallway area. Accumulated dust may not be readily noticeable by all guests, but for those whose eyes catch it, especially when the light catches it just right, it is a major put-off.

9) *Mirrors/windows* - Depending on how the hallways are decorated/constructed, there may be mirrors near the elevators and/or along the corridor, as well as windows at the ends of the hallway or on doors that may be present separating the elevator foyer from the hallway. The mirrors are most likely to accumulate dust just like the light fixtures. The windows may have fingerprints from guests curious to look outside at the view or, if on doors, from guests pushing them open or closed. It seems that people in a hurry rarely use the door handle opting instead to just push with their hands. Similar to guestrooms, often smudges on windows or mirrors cannot be seen at certain angles, so it's always important to inspect windows and mirrors from the side or to bend down and look up.

8) *Elevator tracks* - It is very important to keep the door tracks of the service elevators clean. If too much debris accumulates in them, it can cause the elevators to break down which will subsequently cause frustration and delays since employees cannot get around as quickly. This is especially true in tall hotels (elevators have to travel further and stop more often) and in older hotels (where the elevators can be quite dated). Employees must also be careful not to drop or spill items when moving garbage and room service tables out of the landings.

7) *Thresholds* - A small detail that goes a long way is the maintenance of the metal thresholds in doorways, also known as door saddles. Just as debris gets caught in elevator door tracks, it also gets caught in between the treads of door thresholds. Keeping them clean and polished really gives the guest a good first impression as they enter the room.

6) *Stairwells* - Many guests and employees prefer to use the stairs instead of the elevators. The stairs must be kept free of debris not only to maintain appearance but to prevent any accidents. Guests and employees may drop garbage along the stairwell or cigarette butts from those that do not feel like going outside to indulge. In addition, room attendants sometimes

temporarily store their supplies there such as a vacuum or cleaning supply bag to avoid walking back and forth between the rooms and the service landing. The hotel could be found liable for any accidents that occur within the stairwells if negligence is determined to have played a part. It is also important to remember that often guests as well as travel inspectors from rating agencies will examine stairwells and emergency exits when assessing the overall cleanliness of the property. Attention to cleanliness should not be confined just to the guestrooms and hallways.

5) *Assist room attendants* - Good housemen will automatically help room attendants who are struggling with a difficult room, but some will try to look the other way. It is important to establish an environment of cooperation between room attendants and housemen. Many times a room attendant will come across rooms with an extraordinary amount of garbage that will set them back on time or an extra heavy load of linen if the guests used all the items or got them heavily soaked with water. A houseman that helps with heavy items can help prevent strain and injury on the room attendants and help them maintain their workplace morale.

4) *Scuff marks* - The exteriors of the doors along the hallway must be maintained for appearance. Marks and scuffs caused by bellcarts, luggage, and shoes must be wiped off of the doors and baseboards along the hallway.

3) *Spot check for garbage* - When a garbage can isn't readily accessible some people will generally toss bits of garbage they may have anywhere. The housemen must not only look for these remnants of garbage but also check less obvious places such as planters in the hallway or drawers of decorative cabinets.

2) *Organize service landings* - As the gateway to the guest floors, various employees will pass through the service landings. The housemen must remove all garbage to keep these transitory pathways clear for employees moving back and forth. The floor must be swept and mopped, including underneath any shelves to catch crumbs that might attract vermin. Liquid spills must be cleaned immediately to prevent slip and fall accidents.

1) *Vacuum hallway carpet* - The most common thing housemen will try to skip is vacuuming the corridor carpet. It is one of the most basic aspects of their job, but one they can easily get away without doing if not monitored. Though heavily trafficked between guests and employees traversing back and forth, carpets do not always show obvious signs of not having been vacuumed, especially if it has a dark color or pattern. However, by examining it very closely, the experienced housekeeping supervisor can usually detect such neglect by discovering embedded dirt within the fibers or even small pieces of debris often dropped by guests or room attendants.

The cleanliness of these areas, coupled with the guestrooms, will ensure an overall satisfactory guest experience from a housekeeping standpoint. Your mere presence as a housekeeping supervisor or manager on the guest floors pushes employees to work harder to meet these standards. Knowing the key points to look for will allow you to hit all the important areas quickly, saving precious time in an always hectic day and eliminating excuses for not getting away from the office. ✧

(Elizabeth Kozlowski is the Overnight Housekeeping and Back of the House Manager of the St. Regis New York in New York City. Prior to joining the St. Regis, she was the assistant housekeeping manager at the Four Seasons Hotel New York. The St. Regis New York is comprised of 171 guestrooms and 66 suites and has been awarded both the AAA Five-Diamond Award and the Mobil Five-Stars Award for 14 consecutive years. Elizabeth may be reached via email at: elizabeth.kozlowski@stregis.com)

Pictured below: Train housemen to always check planters and the drawers of hallway furniture for garbage placed there by inconsiderate guests.

