



Risk Management

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

An innovative method to connect with hotel employees regarding workplace safety

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*, the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! ***Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.*** College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: editor@roomschronicle.com

Notice: The ideas, opinions, recommendations, and interpretations presented herein are those of the author(s). The College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University/The Rooms Chronicle assume no responsibility for the validity of claims in items reported.

Workplace safety must be a priority for all hotel managers and associates. While the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses occurred at a rate of 4.6 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers among private industry employers in 2005, the Bureau also reports that the lodging industry posted a far greater nonfatal workplace injuries and illnesses rate of 6.1 cases per 100 equivalent full-time workers for the same time period. And, 3.3% of these recordable injuries resulted in either lost days from work for the employee (1.7%) or necessitated job transfer or restriction of work duties (1.6%). Compare this to the national incident rate for cases with days away from work, job transfer, or restriction of 2.4 cases per 100 workers.

Obviously, it is no mystery that hotels are employment venues where all staff must exercise vigilant care to protect themselves and others from injury on the job. Given the routine nature of many positions, it is easy to understand how employees can lose their vigilance and become complacent to workplace safety dangers. Similarly, it is understood that the lodging industry offers employment to individuals from many different nations and cultures who speak a variety of languages. Therefore, management often struggles with finding a means by which to effectively and repeatedly communicate the need for attention to workplace safety among its employees. Finding and employing an effective communications medium that all employees will recognize or can readily identify with has been made easier though.

In partnership with 20th Century Fox, Safetyworld/Owen Media has created a safety awareness system that features Homer Simpson and the Simpsons characters. According to various sources, *The Simpsons* are the #1 television show in the world with over 13 billion episodes watched annually. In its 17th prime time season, the syndicated show has been translated into over 45 languages and is shown in over 150 countries.

Realizing that the characters from *The Simpsons* enjoy worldwide recognition, Owen Media developed a comprehensive workplace safety communications program that employees can identify with and that will leave a lasting impression. The goal is to help employees remember their safety training, a key factor in reducing the frequency of injuries. This unique approach includes *Safety Meeting Quiz Cards* that use OSHA awareness content with a little humor provided by *The Simpsons* to capture employee attention. Other signature safety materials include matching *Simpsons Safety Posters* for employee entrances and high traffic areas and cafeteria-styled *Table Tents* to reinforce the monthly safety meeting.

Here is how the program works. Department managers hand out the safety meeting cards, either in conjunction with a monthly, workplace safety training session or during a change of shift briefing. After the five-minute safety meeting outline script is read, employees scratch off the correct answers from their safety quiz cards. Often, managers will then raffle off some of the Simpson posters, which are all first editions. Other posters and table tents continue to reinforce the safety message throughout the hotel because of their bright colors, recognizable characters and visual appeal.

According to Brian Krause, district manager for Owen Media, their *Inescapable Messaging* program has been successfully rolled out to multiple Hilton, Marriott and Loews hotels over the last 12 months. It has been well received and there is ample documentation that this system has raised safety awareness. To review *The Simpsons* program online, go to www.safetyworld.com and click on *Topic Library* or contact Brian Krause directly at 215-635-6807 to receive electronic copies. ✧

Pictured below: One of the many workplace safety posters featuring *The Simpsons* available as part of Owen Media's workplace safety communication program.

