



Ask Gail

by Todd Seiders, CLSD

How to deter the theft of flat panel televisions from hotel premises

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.

Dear Gail:

Our hotel has recently experienced a number of thefts of flat panel televisions. What can we do to prevent these expensive televisions from mysteriously disappearing from our guestrooms?

Zac B
Los Angeles, CA

Dear Zac:

You are not the only hotel experiencing this dilemma. We are getting reports of more and more flat panel television thefts from hotels. Here is some theft prevention suggestions that I have found that are working for various hotels.

Other TV thefts occur in common areas of the hotel, such as function rooms, breakfast rooms, etc. There are thefts of TVs from guestrooms, but they are minimal at the time of this writing. So, what can you do to prevent these thefts? Consider these four simple steps:

- 1. Inventory ALL of your flat screen televisions** and write down their serial numbers. Prepare a spreadsheet of all the televisions' serial numbers, make, screen size and exact location inside the hotel. If the TV is stolen, you will have the exact serial number of that television to report to the police.
- 2. Report all thefts to the Police, including the serial number.** Take the time to report the theft. Once it is "officially" reported as stolen, it now becomes a felony crime to sell the TV or to be in possession of it. These TVs show up in police raids, pawn shops, and even at other hotels. Courts and District Attorneys often do not file charges against someone found with a TV, if it was never reported stolen in the first place. Protect your right to prosecute the thief, who may turn out to be an employee.
- 3. Write or paint your hotel name on the back of each TV.** Thieves hate this, as they have to clean it off before they can sell them, and it often looks like they altered or removed something from the TV; so people buying the TV get nervous about the purchase. You can buy felt tip pens that contain and write in paint, not regular ink. It is an easy way to inscribe your hotel's name on each television. Guests won't see the writing on the back of the television. This also leads Police back to your hotel if someone is stopped and has the TV in their back seat.
- 4. Install an anti-theft alarm to each high risk flat panel televisions.** These alarm boxes are typically glued with epoxy onto the back of the TVs. If someone removes the TV, a loud audible alarm is triggered and can run for hours on a small battery. The alarm can be deactivated by Management using a special key when there is a need to move or service the television. Many hotels have used this device and have had good luck with it. It is a reasonably priced anti-theft device for your high risk flat panel TVs.

Pictured below: Only 3.8" x 2" in size, this Sonic Shock alarm will emit a 117 decibel siren for up to two hours.



One such anti-theft alarm that many hotels use is Sonic Shock. It can be used to safeguard televisions, computers, laptops, LCD projectors, and other high-value theft prone equipment. Audible alarms are widely used by colleges, universities, and businesses worldwide who wish to keep high-value electronic assets in the open and accessible without the worry of them "walking off". Designed to emit an ear-piercing audible noise if the equipment is moved, the devices rob thieves of stealth and anonymity. They either have to spend time trying to deal with the alarm, take the alarm with them, or leave empty handed. It is sort of like the red-dye packets that banks insert into the bags of money they are forced to hand over to bank robbers, making it pretty easy to ascertain when a theft occurs. As always, please evaluate the product for yourself, as *The Rooms Chronicle*® and Petra does not guarantee this product, its use or reliability. Neither TRC nor Petra makes money from the sales or recommendation of this product. ✧

(Todd Seiders, CLSD, is a regular contributing author for *The Rooms Chronicle*® and director of risk management for Petra Risk Solutions, which provides a full-range of risk management and insurance services for hospitality owners and operators. Their website is: www.petrarisksolutions.com. Todd can be reached at 800-466-8951 or via e-mail at: todds@petrarisksolutions.com.)