



Ask Gail

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

How to disengage guestroom security door latches from the outside

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

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Dear Gail:

We recently experienced a death in our hotel where the guest expired in their hotel room while asleep. Unfortunately, we did not realize the guest, who was travelling alone, had passed away for quite some time because the deadbolt on the door and the security flip latch were both engaged. The manager was able to use her emergency key to unlock the deadbolt from the outside, but we could not figure out how to disengage the security flip latch. Maintenance finally used a reciprocating saw to cut a hole in the door to unlock the latch. There must be a better way to open a security latch from outside the guestroom in situations such as this?

Curtis M.
Memphis, TN



Dear Curtis:

Indeed, you are correct. There is a special tool designed to open the security latches from the outside. The Security Latch Opener™ is a life-saving tool that, when used in conjunction with a master key or emergency key, enables proper authorities to disengage door security latches from the outside during emergencies. It is made of brushed aluminum and is designed to be wedged between the door jam and the door in order to “poke” the flip latch outwards and open.

In situations where a guest cannot make it to the door or cannot release the security latch because of personal injury, unconsciousness, fire or other emergency situations, rescuers could save the guest’s life in just seconds without breaking down the door by utilizing the Security Latch Opener. It is also ideal in scenarios where children in the guestroom may engage the flip latch when no adult is present in the room and then refuse or are unable to unlock the latch. The patented tool is lightweight and compact, and can be easily carried by hotel security or maintenance personnel, firemen, police, or medical units.

By eliminating the need to break the door and the security latch, the hotel can save money that would normally be associated with costly repairs. In addition, the Security Latch Opener could help reduce insurance costs for hotel owners. The tool has a suggested retail price of \$29.95 and is available from InventHelp® (www.inventhelpstore.com). Just type in the words “door latch opener” in the search box at the website.

Because this tool will open a security door latch from the outside (in conjunction with a key to the guestroom door), hotel personnel must monitor and safeguard this tool with the same degree of care associated with a master key. Hence, it should be kept locked up when not being used or carried by security or maintenance personnel. ✧

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