



Seven steps to reduce Workers Compensation costs and develop a winning safety strategy

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.

As the economy worsens, there will be major concern in the workplace with expenses for the foreseeable future. Safety and the related Workers Compensation insurance costs should not be overlooked.

A safety strategy should be developed for each establishment. Unfortunately, other than an item-by-item protocol, it is not possible to develop a program that will cover all of the properties within a hotel corporation. Therefore, it is advisable that each lodging property take the following actions:

1. Review the OSHA Log 300 and identify the work-related injuries and illnesses on a department-by-department basis. Determine if there is a pattern which could indicate a lack of training, poor supervision or failure to control and eliminate workplace hazards. Also, review those incidents reportable to Workers Compensation but not under the OSHA mandate. Based upon this record review, institute necessary training programs for both employees and supervisors.
2. Work with the affected departments and Engineering/Maintenance Department to provide a priority work-order system so any work location hazard can be promptly corrected. Decide whether the immediate report of a hazard should be to a supervisor or department head. Have a different color work-order that will signal an emergency action as opposed to a routine work-order. This should be immediately delivered by the affected department to Engineering/Maintenance.
3. Have emergency stations strategically located throughout the property which hold warning markers or signs that can be quickly placed at a hazard site to warn individuals to avoid the hazard. A mop, broom and dustpan should also be provided. Regardless of department or job classification, the first employee to discover a hazard should make an immediate correction, if possible, such as picking up dropped materials or mopping a spill. Of course, such incidents would not require a priority work-order to the Engineering/Maintenance department.
4. Organize a Safety Committee. There should be a representative from each department. Do not make the error of designating the individual who has the most accidents. Rather, select the "natural leader" or "mentor" from the department as that person will be responsible for reporting to the department the results and recommended actions from the Safety Committee. Do not burden the committee with other concerns, such as security, fire protection or terrorism, except when incidents under those disciplines relate to a safety incident or potential safety action. Administration of the committee should be under the Safety Department or a designated staff person with safety responsibility, a member of Human Resources or other person designated by the general manager. Notify time and location of a meeting twenty four hours in advance. Prepare an agenda so department representatives will have time to prepare information that might be a discussion item. Limit the meeting to an hour. Generally, a monthly meeting should suffice; unless there are some major safety issues to be considered. The general manager should determine the frequency of meetings under such circumstances. It is advised a member of management serve as chairperson. That designee can be required to study and operate under Roberts Rules of Order. Also, the chairperson must be in control of the session to avoid it from degenerating into a "bitching session."
5. Have occasional surprise inspections where designated members of the Safety Committee will inspect a department other than the department of a member of the inspection team. This is an activity in addition to the regular stated meetings. Also, involve the committee in planning property participation in special programs such as the June Safety Month sponsored by the National Safety Council

Pictured below: Pop-up safety cones such as this store compactly, deploy quickly, and provide immediate warning of a slippery hazard.



(www.NSC.org) or the Fire Prevention Week sponsored by the National Fire Protection Association (www.NFPA.org) each October. The committee can also be instrumental in the planning and implementation of an Off-the-Job Safety Program. For example, by having the property subscribe to the recall program of the Consumer Products Safety Commission (www.CPSC.gov), notice of recalls which cover toys, clothing, furniture, tools, etc., could be converted to a hand-out for the employees and distributed to each department by its safety representative. Another off-the-job safety program could be a Poster Contest with special recognition and prizes for children of the employees. Themes could include holidays, summer or other seasonal subjects. Winning posters may be duplicated and posted. Appropriate prizes may be awarded First, Second, Third and Honorable Mention winners.

6. Consider developing a Mentoring Program. Designate a safety-oriented staff member in each department who would mentor the new employee and assist in training the individual in safe work habits. This is especially valuable in multi-language situations where the mentor could translate for better understanding of management instructions and mandates. Also, in order to better control work-related injury or illness treatments, the mentor could accompany the victim to the company-designated medical services and follow-up with information for management to assist in bringing the person back to work on a limited-work assignment, as may be medically feasible.
7. Finally, a favorite project of your author; provide First Aid and CPR training to EVERY employee. It is inexpensive when compared with the advantage of having every employee ready to provide CPR or first aid in an emergency. The employee would not take over the duties of EMS personnel but would be able to respond in three life-threatening situations when the victim has stopped breathing, has arterial bleeding or has ingested poison. The hotel will enjoy a reduction in accident experience as the employees become more safety conscious and more aware of conditions and practices that should be avoided. And, imagine, the ability to immediately respond with CPR, rather than trying to find a staff person on duty with that training. And don't forget Heimlich Maneuver training for every food and beverage staff person. ✧

(Ray Ellis, Jr., is the founder and director of the Loss Prevention Management Institute, an affiliate of HospitalityLawyer.com. He has spent more than 50 years addressing safety and security concerns in the hotel industry. His textbook, Security and Loss Prevention Management, available from the American Hotel & Lodging Educational Institute, is an authoritative source of information for hotel managers. E-mail: raycellis@gmail.com).