



Housekeeping

by Jim Stover

New housekeeping tool helps minimize strain and repetitive injury to room attendants

*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.

It is no secret that room attendants are prone to strains and repetitive motion injuries. A hotel housekeeper services between 13 –18 guestrooms each day on average. In a typical year she will clean approximately 3,750 bathrooms, make up 5,625 beds, and push her fully loaded housekeeping cart that weighs 250 pounds over a distance of 16 miles. Up to 18 times a day a room attendant will perform over 100 cleaning tasks before moving on to the next guestroom and repeating the cleaning cycle.

As a risk management specialist for a hospitality insurance broker, I am extremely concerned about the impact these standardized cleaning procedures have on a hotel's room attendants. The hospitality insurance industry is seeing an alarming increase in the number of soft tissue/repetitive motion injuries. In fact, material handling claims - if the current trend continues - will likely surpass slips and falls as the number one cause of injuries for hospitality employees. Currently, materials handling and repetitive motion injuries account for 22% of reported workplace accidents and injuries and 29% of workplace injury costs.



Heavier bedding means more injuries

As many hotels have upgraded their bedding packages with thicker mattresses and plusher bed linens and pillows in an attempt to offer more luxurious sleep accommodations, room attendants are forced to lift bulkier and heavier mattresses that can be as thick as 12 inches or more and some can weigh in excess of 400 pounds. As the room attendant works her way around each mattress tucking in the bed sheets, she will likely lift over 12,000 pounds of bedding each day. This repeated lifting exceeds the occupational standards set by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health.

In October 2007, the California Division of Occupational Safety and Health fined a hotel near LAX airport \$14, 425 for violating repetitive motion injury standards and other hazards. All hoteliers should recognize this fine and heed it as a warning that government agencies are serious about the potential risk to their housekeeping employees.

New tool to reduce injuries

There has been a recent innovation to help reduce the fatigue and injuries associated with changing hotel bed linens. Cadence Keen Innovations, a leading inventor and provider of sleep solutions for the hospitality industry, has introduced the Bed MadeEZ™, a new housekeeping device in a unique wedge-shaped, ergonomic design that inserts effortlessly between the mattress and the box spring, creating an automatic lift as it slides in. The mattress then rests in a raised position, eliminating the need for repeated lifting as the linens are changed. This patented innovative device is aimed at reducing back strain and injury experienced by housekeepers, a leading source of Workers' Compensation claims in the hospitality industry, as well as reducing the number of lost workdays due to pain and injury.

"The Bed MadeEZ is a simple solution that solves a large and growing problem," stated Sam Montross, founder and president of Cadence Keen Innovations. "The risk of injury for housekeepers has increased significantly in recent years due to the proliferation

of heavier mattresses which now average a weight in excess of 113 pounds. At a minimum, a housekeeper has to lift the mattress, which is usually only 14 inches off the floor, at least eight times in the course of making a single bed, and that puts great strain on their back, neck and shoulders. The Bed MadeEZ was designed to eliminate this repetitive lifting.”

The cost of mattress injuries

A recent study conducted on the impact of heavier mattresses revealed that room attendants are 48% more likely to be injured on the job than the typical worker in the service sector. They also have a 51% higher chance of incurring serious, disabling injuries. This risk was not lost on OSHA, which found that the strain of making 12 or more king-size beds a day exceeds the federal occupational standards set by the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. As a result, fines are now being imposed on hotels by state regulators in excess of \$14,000 per citation. Potential Workers’ Compensation claims and lost workdays can also be very costly for hotels.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the average claim due to a back-related injury was \$8,321. Likewise, a recent survey of 1,000 housekeepers in Las Vegas found that:

- 95% of room cleaning personnel reported physical pain caused by lifting
- 47% of room cleaning personnel reported severe or very severe pain
- 67% saw a doctor for the pain experienced
- 37% took time off work due to pain

“While hotel beds are some of the most comfortable anywhere, and figure prominently in the marketing campaigns of many brands, the data is indisputable. Heavier mattresses are posing a huge risk to the housekeeper and costing hotels thousands in potential claims and fines,” stated Montross. “The use of Bed MadeEZ could potentially lead to greater employee retention rates, lower insurance premiums and safer working environments. Though it was just introduced in May 2009, so far Omni Hotels, several Holiday Inn hotels, Great Wolfe Lodges and the Royal Lahaina Resort in Maui have placed orders for the Bed MadeEZ.”

Related article from the TRC Archives:

- “Back injuries remain the nation’s number one workplace safety problem.” Vol. 13, No. 1. ✧

(Jim Stover is vice president of hospitality loss prevention for Gallagher Hospitality Services, a division of Arthur J. Gallagher & Co., the world’s fourth largest insurance brokerage and risk management services firm. Jim may be reached at 713-358-5216 or via E-mail: jim_stover@ajg.com To learn more about the Bed MadeEZ, please visit the Cadence Keen Innovations website at: www.cadencekeen.com.)

