



Housekeeping

by James Fields

Room maintenance is not a housekeeping responsibility ... or is it?

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A good housekeeping manager is just as responsible for the hotel’s maintenance as an engineering manager. In an ideal environment the housekeeping staff and managers should act as the eyes and ears of the engineering department. If damaged or broken items are not reported, they can’t be fixed. Proper maintenance will make the perception of cleanliness easier to maintain and reduce guest complaints. Here are some key tactics to enable housekeepers to help its hotel’s maintenance or engineering department.

Coordinate with the engineering department

A successful maintenance program requires teamwork and coordination with other departments including front desk and engineering. Housekeeping and other departments should be responsible for reporting maintenance issues to engineering. The engineering department must be familiar with the reporting procedure and be able to complete the work orders in a timely manner while being able to hold their staff accountable for unfinished work. The front desk must be aware of upcoming maintenance in specific rooms so that those rooms can be taken out-of service. Other guestrooms that may be in close proximity may also be set aside to increase the efficiency of maintenance staff and eliminate any potential discomfort to guests (i.e., noise, paint fumes, unwanted debris and foot traffic) who would otherwise have been assigned to those nearby rooms. At slow times of the year an entire floor should be put out-of-order to conduct maintenance checks, perform deep cleaning, and to reduce energy expense.

Order forms available to all employees

Make it easy for staff to report maintenance issues. Certainly, managers cannot be everywhere. Therefore, it is essential that they encourage their staff to help find items that need maintenance and to report them in a timely manner. Timely reporting is best facilitated by ensuring that all employees have easy access to maintenance work order forms, that employees are trained in how to fill them out, and that the forms are delivered or deposited with engineering personnel for appropriate attention.

Punch lists for projects

Rooms division managers should have an accurate listing of all the rooms in the hotel earmarked for special projects. This can be accomplished best by entering key information onto a punch list spreadsheet. For example, the top of the spreadsheet page should contain the title of the project, while underneath, separate columns are created that indicate the guestroom number, room type, start date of work, as well as columns to indicate that the work has been completed and inspected by management. The punch list will help track the progress of the project and track which rooms still need attention.

Evaluate housekeeping staff

A housekeeping department has tasks to complete throughout the majority of the hotel. In order for items to be repaired or attended to immediately, they must be reported immediately to engineering. Again, since the engineering staff or the management of the housekeeping department cannot be everywhere at once, it is essential that all housekeeping employees participate in the work-order maintenance program by serving

Priority	1	2	3	Completed
Floor				
Back of House				
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				

as engineering's "eyes and ears." Make it clear to housekeeping employees that if an item is broken or damaged they are expected to report that repairs are needed. To support this concept, housekeeping management must hold its employees accountable for fulfilling their role accomplished through room inspections, promotional contests, and daily reminders at the morning housekeeping briefing. Emphasize to the staff that maintenance is an important issue.


Demonstrate that items are reported

It is important for a housekeeping manager to record work orders that have been placed. An excellent way of doing this is to use a computerized spreadsheet. Recording maintenance requests will assist the engineering managers in holding their staff accountable for not completing work and show housekeeping staff that their maintenance reports are being taken seriously. The tracking process should be computerized and have the capability of being sorted by date, room number, type of request, and level of priority.

Another option is to create a maintenance tracking board. Use triplicate carbon-copy work order forms to report maintenance issues.

Copies should stay with the reporting department, the engineering department, and the engineer to whom the repair is assigned. Once the work is completed the engineering copy should be returned to the reporting department. A good way to keep the work orders organized is a board with hooks or nails for the work orders. A sample layout is shown below:

Pictured below: Triplicate carbon-copy maintenance work request forms such as this allow employees to report needed repairs while permitting the reporting and engineering departments to track progress on the request.

		MAINTENANCE REQUEST NO 2462	
DEPARTMENT _____			
BY _____		DATE _____	
SUPERVISOR'S APPROVAL _____			
LOCATION _____			
PROBLEM _____			

ASSIGNED TO _____		DATE _____	
DATE COMPLETE _____		TIME _____	
COMPLETED BY _____			
REMARKS _____			

ORIGINATOR'S COPY			

Once a week a housekeeping manager should check several completed work orders with the engineering manager at random to make sure they have been completed.

Coping with maintenance issues

An engineering manager that I worked with at the beginning of my career summed up maintenance as "Coping with a budget too small to make everything brand new." If you follow these principles you will have **COPEd** with the maintenance issues at your property. Remember that a maintenance program requires perseverance, dedication and the ability to organize a vast amount of information.

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