



# Risk Management

by Jim Stover

## Ten points to help ensure a safe work environment for hotel employees

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“Safety is *everyone’s* job in the workplace.” There is no disputing this. We have all heard this mantra at some point in our career.

Yet, when it comes to minimizing risk, or worse, defending against claims of liability in the workplace, it is often the employer, as represented by Management, which is held legally accountable for injuries incurred by staff members. Regardless of insurance that may be in place or preventative measures a hotel enacts to reduce hazardous working conditions, Management’s responsibility to its employees is a non-delegable duty.

This means quite simply that each and every manager bears the legal and ethical responsibility to monitor workplace environs, take immediate action to correct or warn about any visible or known dangers, and to promote and maintain amongst departments and staff safe work practices. It is not only the right thing to do, but the prudent approach to minimizing Worker’s Compensation claims, decreased productivity and morale, and an increase in injuries.

Short and sweet, here are ten points for every hotel manager to embrace to help ensure a safer workplace:

- 1. Walk The Talk.** Set the standards – set them high – adhere to them; and insist that others also do so. Leadership starts at the top. Employees will mimic what they see from their leaders. If you are ever seen not performing to the standard that has been established, you have just set a new – lower – goal/expectation for your employees. Set the example, be the example. If you expect higher standards from your employees than you are willing to demonstrate yourself, you are nothing more than a hypocrite. Hypocrites are not respected and frequently scorned. Let’s just say it is pretty much all downhill from there...
- 2. Safety Is Integral, Not an Afterthought.** Think: a 3-legged stool with legs for quality, profit, and safety. All three must be of equal importance for a successful operation. Eliminate any one of these stanchions, the stool collapses and disaster ensues. Think about it...does it really matter what your hotel’s profit level is if employees are injured or maimed trying to produce it by cutting corners or minimizing safeguards that were designed to protect the employees? When is the last time you heard the lead story for the 11 o’clock news start off with how much profit a hotel made last quarter? Unfortunately, bad news is what airs. Remember the old journalism saw for local news, as distasteful as it may be: “If it bleeds, it leads!”
- 3. Accountability.** Hold all employees responsible for their own, their co-workers’ and guests’ safety. Managers have a duty to provide a safe work environment, but all employees have an obligation to work safely, avoid risky behavior, inform Management of any unsafe conditions, and promptly report all injuries.
- 4. Behavior.** Immediately (and publicly) reward employees for the good behaviors they exhibit and correct (in private) unsafe ones. Recognition and peer pressure are powerful tools to modify employees’ behavior.
- 5. Safety Committee.** Empower it, staff it with representatives from all departments, and nurture it. The Safety Committee can function as additional eyes and ears for Management, alerting them to hazards and unsafe behaviors.
- 6. Property Inspections.** Perform them monthly. Document hazards; assign appropriate parties with the responsibility and a due date to correct them. If the repair requires a capital request, keep all concerned parties apprised of the approval and implementation procedures. Finally, inspect the area again after repairs to make sure the hazard has been corrected.
- 7. Brainstorm.** Regularly meet with managers and the Safety Committee to predict where the next accident will possibly occur and how to prevent it. Reports of “near misses” can be used for trend analyses and may allow you to be proactive enough to prevent an accident from occurring.



- 8. Don't Forget Families.** We all have families and they deserve safety reminders like our co-workers. Exercise safe practices in the home, not just the workplace. Discuss winter driving, hypothermia, heatstroke, etc. with your loved ones. Safety is a 24-hour a day habit!
- 9. Reward Managers for Meeting Safety Goals.** Managers must be held financially accountable for their employees' safety performance. Measures such as reduced injury frequency or severity, promptness of injury reporting, initiating an active return to work program, and conducting department safety briefings all could be used to rank managers. Incorporate the department's safety performance into the performance appraisals of the department's managers.
- 10. Make Safety Training Interesting.** Invite the fire department to discuss fire safety and demonstrate handheld fire extinguishers, the police to discuss crime prevention, the Red Cross to train employees in first aid, etc. Breaking up the routine of "talking head" presentations with outside presenters and actionable training will provide a valuable learning experience for all. ✧

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