

### Tips for Restoring Hotel Property Operations

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As the pandemic recedes, prepare your hotel for resumed operations with the following tips. Reopening a hotel can be similar to an initial startup, have a plan based on clear and precise roles and responsibilities for each department. Each associate will have a role play in ensuring a seamless, safe return to normal activities.

This Alert Checklist is not a comprehensive guide and must be carefully reviewed and considered based upon company and brand standards; local and Federal health authorities; the specific nature of your property; and a thorough examination, review and assessment of exposures, hazards, and controls. Finally, consult with legal counsel, marketing and public relations teams when developing any form of internal and external policy document and communications with employees, guests, the media and the public.

#### **Maintain Property**

Ensure all areas of the property are maintained in compliance with applicable laws, codes, regulations, and brand standards, and display all signage required by such laws and brand standards. Conduct daily walk-throughs of the entire building and property to ensure that the property is being operated efficiently and that critical systems remain in proper working condition. Consult with legal counsel, marketing and public relations teams when developing any form of internal or external policy document and communications for employees, guests, the media and the public.

#### **COVID-19 Training Programs**

Develop a COVID-19-specific training program for employees with consideration to guidelines provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Training content can include:

- COVID-19 Basics: signs, symptoms and what to do if an employee exhibits symptoms
- Handwashing protocols, including mandated breaks to wash hands
- The location(s) of:
  - Sinks equipped with soap and water for handwashing
  - Hand sanitizers
  - Disinfecting supplies
  - Personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Social distancing measures in place for both guests and employees



- Available PPE; how and when to wear, remove and dispose of PPE
- Reporting safety and health concerns
- Whistleblower protection language

### Re-opening Orientation

General Managers and department heads should set parameters for initial assignments and priorities for supervisors and managers involved in the reopening. This can include scheduling the cleaning activities required and verification that all managers, supervisors and employees understand their responsibilities and safety roles.

Hold additional meetings with department heads, supervisors and Managers to review the reopening tasks and COVID-19 safety protocols. Provide guidance on retraining key tasks with specific hazards, practices or other critical safety trainings by supervision with re-hired staff.

### Physical Distancing Protocols

Consult with legal counsel, marketing and public relations teams to develop protocols regarding physical distancing measures taken with employees and guests. These may include:

Queuing: Areas where guests or employees may queue should be clearly marked for appropriate distancing, such as lines for check-in, check-out, elevator lobbies and transportation.

Front Desk and Concierge: Employees should utilize every other workstation to ensure separation between employees when possible.

Food and Beverage Outlets: Restaurants and bars should reduce seating capacities to a minimum of six feet between each group of guests.

Meeting Spaces: Meeting and banquet areas should allow for physical distancing based on CDC and local health authority recommendations. All self-serve services should be suspended and replaced by alternative methods.

Back of the House: Ensure the appropriate distancing protocols in employee dining rooms, uniform control areas, training rooms, shared office spaces and other areas.

Pools: Pool seating should be configured to maintain six feet between guests.

### Sanitization and Disinfecting Protocols

Carefully consider any new cleaning and sanitizing vendors. Any contract with a third-party vendor should be carefully reviewed and subject to established policies and protocols.

Work with cleaning vendors when selecting products specific to the hospitality industry and the needs of your property. Take the time to discuss:

1. Only using cleaning and disinfecting products that are identified on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) List N of registered disinfectants
2. Obtaining and reviewing Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each product being considered to ensure any hazards are identified and that products are compatible with your property
3. Determining the need for specific tools and containers for proper product use
4. Considering alternative equipment such as pressurized spray containers and electrostatic sprayers, and ensure that the application equipment does not compromise the applied sanitizer or disinfectant
5. Testing samples of surfaces and fabrics throughout the property before applying the disinfectants to avoid damage or stains
6. Determining the cleaning vendor's ability to assist in training employees in the correct mixture or dilution (if necessary); use of appropriate secondary containers and labeling; and use of cleaning product(s)

Ensure the selection and use of PPE is adequately considered and implemented when looking to reduce hazards. PPE should be provided by the employer at no expense to the employees in a variety sizes.

When considering tasks that involve chemical, dust, particulate and vapor exposures, be certain that you are basing your evaluations and selection of PPE on product information and PPE recommendations in the products' SDS. Additionally, when considering tasks that involve exposure to bio-hazards, be certain you are basing your evaluations and selection of PPE on your property-specific Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan and Infection Control Plan. These may include consideration of eye and face, hand and respiratory protection.

Examples of PPE:

- Nitrile gloves
- Gown or apron such as disposable Tyvek-style coveralls
- Mask or Respirator
- Goggles or Face Shield

Ensure that employees are trained in, and adhere to, the CDC guidelines for donning and removing PPE

Consider the following guidelines for 'high-touch' areas.

Public Spaces and Communal Areas: Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing of all public spaces, especially on common contact surfaces including check-in counters, bell desks, elevators and elevator buttons, escalator and stair handrails, door handles, public restrooms, room keys and locks, pool and fitness center equipment, dining surfaces and seating areas.

Guest Rooms: Consider updating cleaning and sanitizing protocols for guest rooms, with particular attention to high-touch items in the guestroom and restrooms. This may include television remote controls, toilet seats and handles, door and furniture handles, water faucet handles, nightstands, telephones, in-room control panels, light switches, temperature control panels, alarm clocks, luggage racks and flooring.

If the hotel is notified of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the guest's room may be removed from service and remain unserviceable until the case has been cleared. The room should only return to service after undergoing an enhanced sanitization protocol approved by the local health authority as required.

Laundry: Wash all bed linen and laundry at a high temperature in accordance with CDC guidelines. Dirty linen should be bagged in the guest room to eliminate excess contact.

Back of the House: Increase the frequency of cleaning and sanitizing high traffic employee only areas with consideration to employee dining rooms, entrances, uniform control rooms, restrooms, loading docks, offices and kitchens.

Shared Equipment: Ensure that shared tools and equipment are sanitized before, during and after each shift or anytime the equipment is transferred to a new employee. This may include phones, radios, computers and other communication devices, payment terminals, kitchen implements, engineering tools, safety buttons, folios, cleaning equipment, keys, time clocks and all other direct contact items used throughout the property.

### **Employee and Guest Health Statement**

The health and safety of employees and guests should be the number one priority. Some considerations when developing a statement to communicate employee and guest health may include:

Employee and Guest Health Concerns: Communicate that employees received clear instructions to report all presumed cases of COVID-19 on property and are ready to provide support to our guests. Employees should be instructed to stay home if they feel ill. Offer instructions for contacting a manager if employees notice a coworker or guest on the property exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19. Employees and guests who are exhibiting any of the symptoms of COVID-19 while at the property are instructed to immediately notify their manager (employees) or hotel management (guests).



**Physical Distancing:** Communicate that employees and guests should practice physical distancing by standing at least six feet away from other groups of people around the property whenever possible. Restaurant tables and other common area layouts can be arranged to ensure appropriate distancing. All food and beverage outlets should comply with local or state mandated occupancy limits.

**Signage:** Ensure placement of health and hygiene reminders throughout the property and in the back of the house including the proper way to wear, handle and dispose of PPE. For employees, be certain to have signage for proper glove use, hand washing and protocols for avoiding touching ones face .

**Hand Sanitizer:** Consider providing touchless hand sanitizer dispensers at key guest and employee entrances and contact areas such as driveways, reception areas, hotel lobbies, restaurants, meeting and convention spaces, elevator landings, pools and exercise areas.

**Case Notification:** Discuss communicating a policy to address the awareness of a presumptive or confirmed case of COVID-19 at the property. Advise how management will work with the local health authorities to determine the appropriate actions for handling.

### **Employee Responsibilities Policy**

Employees are essential in establishing and maintaining an effective sanitation and health program. Some considerations when reviewing a company and property policy for employee responsibilities may include:

**Safety Training:** Communicating that all employees should receive training on COVID-19 safety and sanitation protocols, with more comprehensive training for teams with frequent guest contact including housekeeping, food and beverage, public area departments and hotel operations.

**Hand Washing:** Communicating that proper hygiene and frequent handwashing is vital to help combat the spread of the virus. All employees should be instructed to wash their hands every 60 minutes for 20-seconds at a time, or to use sanitizer when a sink is not available. Employees should wash their hands after: using the restroom, sneezing, touching their face, blowing their nose, cleaning, sweeping, mopping, smoking, eating, drinking, going on break and before or after starting a shift.

**PPE:** Communicating the appropriate PPE that is to be made available and worn by employees in adherence to state or local regulations and guidelines. Employees should be trained on how to properly use and dispose of PPE. Employees should be advised that when entering the property, they will be provided a mask and required to wear it while on property. Discuss having gloves provided to employees who are in direct contact with guests.



Daily Pre-Shift Meetings and Timekeeping: Consider conducting employee pre-shift meetings to address physical distancing between employees. Discuss modifying larger departments and staggering employee arrival times to minimize traffic volume in back of the house areas. Offer hand sanitizer at each timeclock location and require employees to sanitize their hands after clocking in. Management teams should ensure constant communication and proper PPE and sanitation procedures are followed and updated per the latest guidance from authorities.

### Employee Training Programs

Consider reviewing your current safety and health program elements and policies, including new employee and ongoing training. Also consider developing an infection control policy that is aligned with the exposures and controls for your property. It may be helpful to review your new hire orientation content and format and ensure employee safety training has allocated the proper resources, including time, to exposure-specific elements in your properties. Refer to OSHA standards for additional information.

Training methods, content and communications should include the essential elements of OSHA's general duty clause, as well as how the employer is able to demonstrate:

- (1) Reasonable efforts to keep the workplace free of a hazard to which employees are exposed;
- (2) That the hazard was recognized, and how;
- (3) The hazard was causing or was likely to cause death or serious physical harm; and,
- (4) A feasible and useful method to correct the hazard

Training content may provide instruction for identifying and assessing hazards, as well as explain how the hierarchy of controls are utilized and implemented.

### Whistleblower Protections

Consider including whistleblower protection language in health, safety and other employment policies. Content to consider may include verbiage where employees are encouraged to report health and safety concerns to their supervisor and/or Human Resources department without fear of retaliation, which may include:

- Firing or laying off an employee
- Blacklisting
- Demoting
- Denying overtime or promotion
- Disciplining
- Denial of benefits
- Failing to hire or rehire
- Intimidation
- Reassignment affecting promotion prospects
- Reducing pay or hours
- Making threats

It may be helpful to consult with your legal counsel, marketing, and public relations teams to develop language and policies. Implementing this protection may assist in demonstrating the existence of a comprehensive health and safety program that endeavors to be dynamic, proactive, effective and aligned with OSHA and other regulatory standards.

Finally, whistleblower protection language may assist in the following ways:

- Attracting new applicants, talent, and potential employees;
- Encourage furloughed employees to consider a return to the company;
- Provide an affirmative defense to claims from employees and their representatives who may be unwilling to return to work in order to remain eligible for unemployment benefits under the guise of unfounded concerns that their employer may not be, or is not, taking reasonable steps to assess, mitigate and control hazards to their health and safety.

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**EPA** <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

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