



Housekeeping, Engineering & Security

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Explain the functions of Housekeeping Department
- ✓ Explore different Managerial Styles
- ✓ Assess the importance of Hotel Security Housekeeping

Housekeeping, Engineering & Security

Housekeeping

"Efficiently managed housekeeping departments ensure the cleanliness, maintenance, and aesthetic appeal of lodging properties. The housekeeping department not only prepares clean guest rooms on a timely basis for arriving guests, it also cleans and maintains everything in the hotel. Kappa, Nitschke and Schappert (1997)

As implied by the name, housekeeping activities are linked with the maintenance of a hotel establishment. The main duty of housekeeping department is to maintain the cleanliness of the hotel, including both back-of-the-house and front-of-the-house areas. Setting good standards in room cleaning and public area cleaning can ensure a comfortable, safe and hygienic environment for hotel guests and staff in the property.

In the traditional structure, these works present information that say housekeeping oversees four chief areas of obligation:

1. Management of people, equipment, and supplies
2. Preservation of building finishes, fabrics, and furnishings
3. Cost control
4. Recordkeeping

Organisation of Housekeeping Department

To operate even a small hotel of thirty rooms, huge amounts of linen and a medium sized staff for cleaning and keeping the hotel hospitable for the visitors will be needed. Typically the housekeeping department is the largest department in a hotel and has a great number of staff members. Thus, this department in every hotel must have a highly organized setup regardless of the size.

Some of the department's main responsibilities can be abridged as follows:

- a) Housekeeping Manager:** This position may also be referred to as the Head or Executive Housekeeper and is the one ultimately accountable for the staff deployment, development, profitability and operating standards of the department. A successful housekeeping manager needs to be able to delegate, offer community guidance and direction. Such skills are a must to become a housekeeping manager. It is the housekeeping manager who has the overall responsibility for the standards of cleanliness, maintenance and the financial accomplishments within the department.
- b) Floor Supervisor:** Otherwise known as floor housekeeper, has charge of a given floor and set number of rooms. His/her chief job is to make certain the quality and efficiency of the room attendants. Once

the room has been inspected and meets the set standards, it is "handed" to the front office for renting to a guest. Additionally the floor

supervisors provide training to the new room attendants while re-training the existing staff for corrective methods. Finally, they are responsible for the apparatus and controlling costs within their domains of responsibility, and liaison with other departments like maintenance and front office.

Linen management, refuse and cleaning gear is also the duty of the floor supervisor. Dispatching used linen for cleaning and getting clean linen for the following day's room cleaning is vital aspect of the job. Keeping exact count of the linen also has to be kept at all times in the linen closet.

- c) **Room Attendants:** Room attendants are also called housekeeping assistants. They are essentially required to keep very high standards of cleanliness in the rooms allotted to them. Cleaning a room includes vacuuming it, rubbing down toilets, replenishing used toiletries, changing linen and towels and ensuring that the basic set-up of the room is proper. Making a report of any maintenance issues to the appropriate department personnel is another key function carried out by room attendants. At times guests place their queries regarding the local amenities or about hotel facilities to the room attendants and while answering these queries they play their role in customer relations. All of these duties have to be carried out in an allotted amount of time as they are assigned a specific number of rooms to maintain.

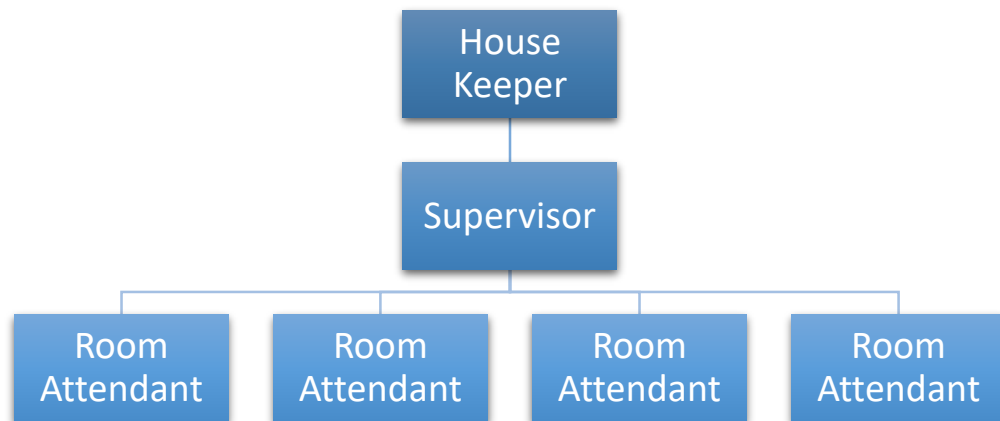


Fig: 1.1

Functions Of The Housekeeping Department

Cleaning of the bedroom floors situated outside of the bedroom is an extended function of housekeeping and this can include the staircases, public cloakrooms and other public areas of the property. At times agencies from outside are employed for the cleaning of the public areas like the lobby and restaurant area in addition to men's and women's restrooms. Such activities are conducted at odd hours or times when

there is minimal public found in these areas. The standard of cleanliness must be upheld and it is the responsibility of the executive housekeeper to ensure that pre-set standards of cleanliness are followed in every area of the hotel whether it is the fire-exit stairwells or goods lifts or any other area in the public domain. To make sure this happens, the executive housekeeper begins his/her day with rounds, followed by an assistant housekeeper of all areas that are visited by the public. For this to happen the department has to make an effort to maintain the set standards after they have been set and approved.

Other areas that come under the housekeeping department include:



Fig: 1.2

- 1. Lost and Found Department:** Quiet often during the cleaning process a room attendant will come across personal items left behind by the guests. The value of the items may range from almost nothing to thousands of pounds like in the case of Rolex watches, etc. All such items found in the process of cleaning the rooms need to be handed over by the attendants to the floor supervisors. They in turn make a list of all articles found against specific room numbers.
- 2. First Aid:** If guest require first aid, it is provided by the housekeeping department which maintains the first aid kit.
- 3. Floral Arrangement:** Another duty of the housekeeping department is to maintain fresh floral arrangements all around the hotel. All arrangements in the public areas like the lobby or restaurants and private areas like the guest bedrooms are displayed by the housekeeping department.
- 4. Laundry Services:** The laundry services available to the guests staying in the hotel are typically offered by housekeeping. The laundry needing washing is collected from the guest's room; washed, dried, and

ironed and brought back to the room of the guest. Previously, all hotels maintained in-house laundry services but, now many hotels outsource this service both for the hotel linen along with the guest laundry.

5. Purchasing: this role of the housekeeping department is one involving the transaction of a lot of funds. Hence, it is an important section where profitability of the hotel may be affected if the range of products are not purchased with care and supplies not managed. The chief purchasing areas under the umbrella of Executive housekeeping area include:

- a) Bedroom supplies: e.g., laundry bags, breakfast, cards, shoeshine, etc.,
- b) Bathroom supplies: e.g., toiletries,
- c) Linen: bed sheets and towelling,
- d) Tea and coffee making facilities (TCMF): e.g., tea/coffee sachets, sugar, milk and biscuits,
- e) Working replacements: e.g., shower curtains, crockery, glassware, vacuum cleaners, trolleys, etc.,
- f) Cleaning supplies: e.g., air freshener, bleach, cleaning product, and
- g) Uniforms: e.g., for the room attendants/porters.
- h) It is necessary for the Executive housekeeper to ensure that the supplies and their consumption are monitored. The list of items in the purchasing list can be further classified into:
 - Consumable: bedroom supplies, cleaning supplies and TCMF
 - Assets: uniforms, working replacement and linen.

(Source: **Accommodation Management**, edited by Constantinos S. Verginis and Roy C. Wood).

Different policies are maintained for the two distinct groups of purchasing by the Executive housekeeping. The true usage of the first group (consumable) purchases can be projected according to the occupancy rate of the hotel. Since it is vital to maintain these items in stock, the staff can request their requisitions on a daily weekly basis. So the Executive housekeeper has to not only establish the demands, but needs to control the use of consumable items as well through the maintenance of detailed invoices and requisitions. The numbers of consumable items are numerous and if the proper monitoring is not carried out, needless to say it will affect the overall profit statement of the hotel. Now, computers help to carry out this function.

“Assets”, while not in the true sense, include things like uniforms and are not consumed on a regular basis, and have no need for a daily replacement. However, the upkeep of the uniform is the duty of the staff and they need to show up immaculately dressed daily. Other items such as vacuum cleaners or crockery are passed out over a given amount of time and are recorded as depreciation. Hotel’s linen is hard to manage; since in a large hotel roughly 5000 dirty linens are sent for cleaning every day. To count and recheck the linen from and to laundry is a very difficult job. Additionally, guests have a tendency to pilfer things like towels from hotels. To keep a check on the linen stock, maintain it and when the need arises restock it becomes a top priority for the housekeeping manager.

Management of Guest Amenities

Every hotel keeps a list of amenities that they make available to their guests in every room. The housekeeping department is the go between that supplies these consumable goods in every room.

| | 600 Room Deluxe Class Hotel, City Centre location, Mainly Business Bookings | 800 Room Medium Class Hotel, Sub-Urban location, Mainly Group Bookings |
|------------------------|--|--|
| Entrance | “Do Not Disturb” card | “Do Not Disturb” card Breakfast menu Fire escape plan |
| Desk Top | Telephone directory Fire escape plan Typhoon safety regulations IDD booklet Guidebook Breakfast menu Sewing kit Ball pen Food and beverage information | Guest directory Guidebook Tent card promotion Ashtray Match box Folder with standard stationeries |
| Desk-top Folder | Letter paper/envelopes Telex/Fax forms Thank you and postcards Cable Television guide Blotting paper Limousine service Health spa information | |
| Closet | Laundry bags and list | Laundry bags and list |

| | | |
|--------------------------|--|---|
| | <p>Dry cleaning bag and list</p> <p>Leather shoehorn</p> <p>Leather clothes brush</p> <p>Shoe shine kit</p> <p>Shoehorn</p> <p>Hangers</p> | <p>Shopping bag</p> <p>Wooden hangers</p> |
| Mini Bar Services | <p>Glasses and ice bucket</p> <p>Bottle opener</p> <p>Water (mineral/distilled)</p> <p>Coasters</p> <p>Mini bar on request</p> | <p>Ice bucket</p> <p>Opener</p> <p>Glasses with coaster</p> <p>Red wine glasses – 2</p> <p>on request Champagne glasses – 2</p> <p>304 glasses – 2</p> <p>306 glasses – 2</p> <p>Tumbler – 1</p> <p>Napkins – 2</p> <p>Stirrers – 2</p> <p>Drink voucher</p> <p>Rattan basket with liquor</p> |
| Bedside Table | <p>Int'l direct dialling telephone</p> <p>Control panel/switches</p> <p>Radio channels</p> | <p>Int'l direct dialling telephone</p> <p>Control panel/switches</p> <p>Radio channels</p> <p>Phone directory</p> |
| Sitting Area | <p>Television set</p> <p>Remote control</p> <p>Magazines/Newspapers</p> | <p>Television set</p> <p>Remote control</p> <p>Magazines/Newspapers</p> |

| | Flowers | Flowers |
|---------------------|--|---|
| Bathroom | Bath towels – 2 Hand towels – 2 Face towels – 2 Tissue box and tissues Tumblers with coaster Soap dish with soap Foam bath and shampoo Rubbish bin Sanitary bag Shoe shine mitt Shaving socket Bathrobes Slippers Glass jar and cotton buds Bath salts Bottle opener Vase (bud) Emery board Mild clothes detergent Shower cap Hair dryer | Bath towels – 2 Hand towels – 2 Face towels – 2 Tissue box and tissues Tumblers with coaster Soap dish with soap Foam bath and shampoo Rubbish bin Sanitary bag Shoe shine mitt Shaving socket Plant |
| Upon Request | Swimming goggles Adaptors/Transformers Heaters Iron (with board) Baby supplies/crib | Adaptors Heaters Iron (with board) Baby supplies/crib |

| | | |
|--|------------------|--|
| | Extension cord | |
| | Clothes rack | |
| | Luggage rack | |
| | Comb | |
| | Disposable razor | |
| | Shaving cream | |

Table 3.1: Specific Amenities

(Source: Hotel Management, Sue Baker)

Just giving these amenities is not sufficient. It is the job of the housekeeping department to manage and maintain these goods. The housekeeping staff has to keep a check on the usable items in the rooms to determine their success in terms of profit or loss to the hotel. The hotel needs to come up with a set standard of maintaining the room. A very simple and systematic method of delivering standardized service is to make use of a checklist.

Room Status Codes

Special codes and terminologies are widely used by hotels in enhancing the inter-departmental communications. Room status codes are mainly applied by the housekeeping and front office departments in verbal or in words and can always be seen in reports of rooms division and computer systems.

One typical example of how these special codes and terminology are used is that when a guest check-out from the front desk and settles his account, the front desk computer system will automatically change the room status to 'Vacant Dirty' or 'VD'. This enables housekeeping staff to make up the room promptly for arriving guests. Once the

'Vacant Dirty' room is made ready for sale, housekeeping department will notify the **M** front desk through changing the room status to 'Vacant Clean' ('VC') or 'Inspected Clean' ('I').

Some common examples and their detail descriptions are shown in Table 2.14 as below:

| Terminologies | Codes | Descriptions |
|---------------|-------|--------------|
|---------------|-------|--------------|

| | | |
|------------------------|---------|--|
| Occupied Clean | OC | The room is occupied and has been cleaned by room attendant |
| Occupied Dirty | OD | The room is occupied and hasn't been cleaned by room attendant |
| Vacant Clean / | VC / VR | The room is vacant and has been cleaned by room attendant or ready for sale |
| Vacant Dirty | VD | The room is vacant and hasn't been cleaned by room attendant |
| Do Not Disturb | DND | The guest has requested no disturbances |
| Out of Order | OOO | The room is under maintenance, refurbishment or extensive cleaning |
| Extra Bed | XB | An extra bed is being used in the guest room |
| Light Baggage | LB | An occupied room with no large baggage, e.g. trunk |
| No Baggage | NB | An occupied room with no baggage |
| No Need Service | NNS | The guest has requested 'no service' for the room |
| Sleep-out | SO | The guest is supposed to be staying in the room but the bed has no signs of being used |
| Check-out | CO | The guest has paid the bill and checked out his/ |

| | | |
|---------------------------|------|--|
| Expected Departure | ED | It is the same as 'due-out' which means the guest would depart prior to the check-out time of the following day |
| Inspected Clean | I | The room is double checked by the floor supervisor after the cleaning of room |
| Did Not Check | DNCO | The guest has paid or made payment arrangement but has not completed the check-out processes or informed the front desk while |
| Late Check-out | / | The guest has requested and is approved to check out later than the standard check-out time |
| Skipper | / | The guest has not paid and left without informing the front desk |
| Complimentary | / | The room is occupied for free |
| Stay-over | / | The guest is not checking out today and will remain at least one more night |
| Lock-out | / | The occupied room has been locked which disallows the guest to re-enter until he/she comes into contact with hotel staff to clarify his/her status |

Table 3.2 - Room Status Codes and Terminologies

Managerial Styles



Fig: 1.3

- **Coercive:** The “do-it-the-way-I-tell-you” manager closely controls subordinates and motivates by threats and discipline.
- **Authoritative:** The “firm but fair” manager provides workers with clear direction and motivates by persuasion and provides feedback on performance of task.
- **Affiliative:** The “people first, task second” manager stresses good personal relationships among his staff and motivates by trying to keep people happy with fringe benefits, security, and social activities.
- **Democratic:** The “participative” manager encourages input on decision making among his subordinates and motivates by rewarding team effort.
- **Pacesetting:** The “do it myself” manager completes many of the tasks personally, expects subordinates to follow his or her example, and motivates by establishing high standards and allowing subordinates work on independently.

- **Coaching:** The “developmental” manager aids and encourages subordinates to further improve their functioning and motivates by providing chances for professional development. (McBer, no date)

The profile of managerial style has an effect on both primary and backup styles. Primary is the type of behaviour one makes use of most frequently, is most at ease with, and is the method to which one normally turns when in stress. Backup refers to an alternative way of managing one uses when the primary style is ineffective.

Engineering

In one respect engineering, housekeeping, and security can all be thought of as guest services. In majority of the hotels, guest services are a visible facet that may include concierge, uniformed service, garage, and specialized recreational and leisure activities. Housekeeping, guest security and hotel security, and maintenance of the engineering systems of the hotel are typically behind the scenes and are not noticed nor do they interact with the guests directly, they are only interacting in an abstract way. However, they are critical services for the safety, comfort – and by extrapolation successful – stay of the guest at the hotel.

Security

The security department of the hotel is essential to delivering hospitality to the guests. This department is answerable for setting the details of the following systems.

- Guest and employee safety
- Room key security
- Fire safety systems
- Bomb threat action
- Emergency evacuation plans
- Employee safety training plans
- Emergency communication plans

These operational procedures are never fully valued until a crime takes place or disaster hits the hotel. They are thought to be in place but tend to take second place to taking care of the guests’ more immediate requirements and meeting the financial objectives of the hotel.

National, state, and local safety codes and ordinances necessitate the hotelier to offer a safe environment to the guests. This section highlights safety awareness as it links to the front office manager’s job and how the front office aids in making this vital service available to guests.

Importance of a Security Department

The front office is the communications centre of the hotel. It is a vital link between the hotel, management and the guest. When a call is made for assistance due to illness, theft, fire or any other emergency, it is typically the front office that has to respond. The front office on-duty staff cannot leave their station to and resolve the emergency since, they need to continue to provide communication services and keep on processing financial transactions. It is the security department staff that has to react with speed and urgency to serve the guest.

The security department is frequently considered as a passive department, reacting only when called upon. In reality, it is a very active department, establishing policies, organizing programmes, and imparting training programmes to endorse guest and employee safety. The director of security is a trained professional who has to make certain that a busy hotel loaded with guests, employees and equipments remains safe. One of the aims of the department is to avert emergencies through proper planning. Another aim however, is to train all hotel employees to answer emergencies.

According to Hotel Security Report write-up by Patrick M. Murphy, CPP, priority security areas are as follow:

- **Building entrances**—a review of the property should ensure that all entrances are welcoming and brightly lit with no shrubbery in the way. During night times, side entrances use should be restricted by use of card readers so that non-registered guests have to go through the lobby and pass the main check-in-desk.
- **Hotel lobbies**—need to be designed to be visually open, with minimal blind sport for the front desk workers. Lobbies also should be designed so that the people walking through the front door have to go by the front desk to reach the guestroom corridors or elevators.
- **Guestrooms**—These (electronic locking systems) offer an atmosphere where keys are automatically changed when a new guest checks in; locks may be integrated to figure the last person who entered into the room.
- **Guest amenities** – Marriott plans its new properties using more glass in doors and walls to allow for maximum witness potential when building swimming pools, exercise rooms, laundry facilities, and vending areas. The addition of house phones in these locations allows guests to call for help if they feel there is a threat or they are uncomfortable with the presence of some people.
- **Exterior of the property** – CPTED philosophy requires that there be bright lighting at entrances and walkways. Traffic should be guided towards the front of the hotel property to make potential criminals as noticeable as possible. Entrances leading to hotel grounds should be minimized. Landscaping using shrubbery or hedges can be utilized in aesthetically becoming ways to guide the desired traffic and pedestrian flow.

- Parking** – metal halide lighting is the preferred choice here. Avoid the high-pressure sodium lights as they cast a harsh yellow light. The ideal parking lot or garage should have one entrance and exit with clearly marked routes for pedestrians and cars. Garages should be as spacious as possible, with clear lines of sight. Elevators and stairwells leading from the garage into the hotel should open into the hotel lobby level, from where a different set of stairs or elevators should be used to reach the guestroom floors. Other CPTED elements for the garage should include CCTV (closed-circuit television), emergency call boxes, cameras, and walls painted white to enhance luminosity of the lighting and creating an environment that is appealing to the eye.

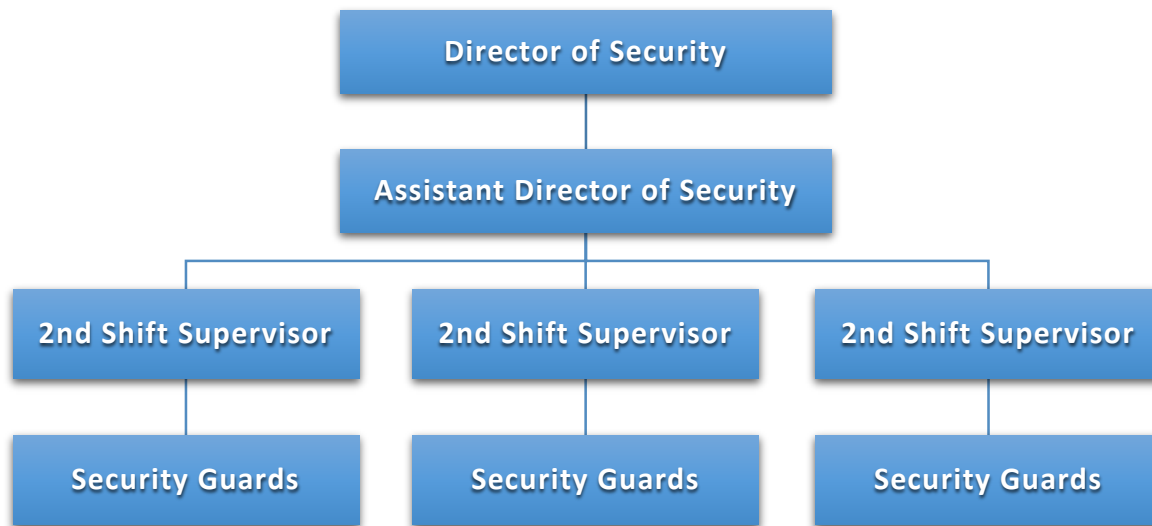


Fig: 1.4 Organization chart for a security department

Organization of a Security Department

The security department of the hotel should be organised like any other department. Director is at the head of the department, whose responsibility is to maintain a safe atmosphere for the guests and employees. The security director must have technology, personnel, and a budget to run a 24-hour control system on the property. Depending on the size of the property, an assistant director of security might be needed, who takes over in the absence of the director and aids in the administrative and supervisory role of the department.

The director of security works and reports to the general manager in addition to keeping in touch with each department head. Every one of the shifts (7 a.m. to 3 p.m., 3 p.m. to 11 p.m., and 11 p.m. to 7 a.m.) has its own shift supervisor and security guards who are accountable for patrolling the grounds to keep an eye on the activities of the employees and guests and inspect the security equipment. The workforce needed to staff this department depends on the size of the property. Figure 1.4 is an organization chart outlining security department for a big sized hotel.

In-House Security Departments Versus Contracted

Security Services

The General Managers of the property have to decide if running an in-house security department is cost-effective. Running a well-organized security department has to be the main concern when thinking of hiring an outside security firm. Like the job analysis for the director of security showed, the position requires more than merely patrolling the halls and grounds of the property. **Foot patrol**-walking the halls, corridors and outdoor areas of a hotel to seek breaches in guest and employee safety-is a vital feature of the security, but it is a preventive measure, not an active way of organizing security. However, under some conditions, the general manager may be forced, for monetary reasons, to think of hiring an outside service. Administrative and planning methods for running a security department may be entrusted to other department heads. The cost factor must be calculated against planning and coordinating a safe atmosphere for the guest and employee.

The per hour rate charged by the security service for escort service, carrying out periodic hall patrol; and for conducting surveillance of the parking garage may appear very appealing compared to the annual salaries and administrative overhead sustained by running an in-house security department 24-hours every day. But additional factors beyond cost have to be considered. Who will coordinate with other department directors to set up fire safety and security procedures? Who will design and execute fire safety and security training sessions? Who will supervise fire safety devices? Who will coordinate with city officials in interpreting fire and safety codes? Who will bring management up to date with latest technology to make certain a safe environment is maintained? These and other considerations will have to be addressed if owners and management are committed to the idea of security.

If external security service is hired, the duty of maintaining security is delegated out to the different department heads. The director of maintenance can run the fire safety and security equipment, maintain operating ledgers of fire safety equipment and elevators and to respond to dangerous situations. If time allows, the general manager will put together a safety committee that responds to government directives and potential dangers. Every department director, if time allows, will institute security guidelines based on prior personal experiences. Under these situations, safety and security end up being low priorities.

Encountering the challenges of giving security to guests and employees needs a fulltime approach. Part-time endeavours to control crises in a hotel might be short sighted.

Room Key Security

Among the responsibilities of the director of security is to set up and maintain a **room key control system**, an administrative process that permits limited personnel and registered guests access to the keys.

While issuing and filing of keys are responsibilities of the front office employees, room key control entails a little more. Room locks and keys are one of the most efficient methods of ensuring guest safety.

Typically one of the two varying lock systems are used-the hard-key system or the electronic key system. **Hard-key systems** are made up of the conventional large key that fits into the keyhole in a lock; the tumblers inside are preset and they turn with the designated key. The **electronic key system** is made up

of: battery-powered or more rarely, hardwired locks, a computer and terminals for hosting, keypuncher, and **distinctive** entry cards which are used in place of keys. The computer that hosts will generate combinations for the locks, terminates the old ones and keeps an account of master keying systems. The front desk staff utilizes a minimum of one computer terminal to register the guest and an additional keypuncher to create the card. An electronic locking system enables the hotel to produce a “fresh” key for each guest. Once the guest inserts the key into the door, the lock’s smart microchip scans the combination punched on the key and accepts it as the new, legitimate combination for the door, rendering all prior combinations improper.

A separate variation of the electronic key is the **smart card**, an electronic device housing a computer chip that allows a hotel guest or an employee access to the assigned area, tracking , and debit-card abilities for the guest.

Electronic key access is one of the numerous variations through which the property managers can select. The system has an electronically coded key and door controllers that may be programmed easily to identify one or more codes. Because the electronic keys are allocated codes from among the many billion possible combinations, they are practically impossible to copy.

Fire Safety

Hearing someone yell “Fire!” will create panic among those not prepared to deal with this hazardous situation. Well coordinated safety procedures that are properly managed at the onset of the fire can have lifesaving connotations for employees and guests. The front office

manager and the director of security must create an effective fire safety and flight plans, as well as training programmes for the workforce to ensure their usefulness.

Fire Code General Requirements

To start a fire safety plan you have to start with the fire safety codes of the municipality in which the hotel is situated. These codes will specify construction materials, entrance and exit requirements, interior design fabrics, smoke alarm installation and maintenance, space limitations, sprinkler system and maintenance, fire drill testing, fire alarm operation and maintenance, and other related items. These detailed codes were developed to make sure of guest safety. They may need extra monetary investment, but they are designed to protect the guest and other occupants of the establishment.

Guest Expectations

Consciously or unconsciously, hotel guests expect to be provided with a safe environment for the duration of their stay. Some guests may seek a room on a lower levels or make inquiries regarding smoke alarm installation. However, majority of the other guests will not ask about fire safety measures. Once the guests are settled into the guest room, they may give a passing glance to the evacuation procedure posted behind the door.

Some guests might even count the number of doors to the closest exit. Is this sufficient? Will human lives be in danger because guests' other, more important issues have caused them to put their safety in the hands of the management and employees of the property?

Fire Safety Plan

The front office manager wishing to take active precautions to make certain of guest safety has to develop a simple fire safety plan; pass this on to the employees and guests, and train employees and guests to cope with a difficult situation. All this will include the commonsense ideas below:

1. Install smoke detectors in every guest room and public area which is linked to a central communications area.
2. Test and maintain smoke detectors on a regular basis, maintain up-to-date records of the tests.
3. Install, maintain and test fire alarms according to local fire code regulations; again maintain up-to-date records of the tests.
4. Regularly check smoke detectors and fire alarm systems (If possible at the front desk).
5. Get ready and post plans of floors showing fire exit points by area-public area, work area, and guest-room area.
6. Offer instructions for guests and employees regarding the location of nearest fire extinguishers and fire alarm location, along with the procedures for evacuating the building and fire safety guidelines.
7. Set up a fire action communication plan for the front office personnel.

Employee Training in Fire Safety

When employees are provided with training programs on locations of the fire exits, fire extinguishers and fire alarms and on how to evacuate a building, it hugely increases the chances that every occupant will escape the building in relative safety if the need arises. After providing the training to the new and existing employees regarding fire exits, extinguishers and alarms in the building, supervisors can carry out spot-checks on efficiency of the training with arbitrary questions like: "Where is the nearest fire exit when you are cleaning room? Where is the nearest fire extinguisher when you are in the bakery? Where is the nearest fire alarm when you are in the laundry?" Such basic questions, repeated frequently, allow the employees to know of the importance of fire safety.

Employees can be trained to use the fire extinguishers by the local fire department or the director of security. Informal training sessions like these should include operational procedures and information on using the right type of fire extinguisher. Once a fire starts, that is not the time to start reading instructions. Training sessions such as these will provide employees with confidence in their ability to take care of an emergency.

Guest Instruction in Fire Safety

Frequently providing guests with fire safety instructions is overlooked. They come to the hotel to enjoy and relax. However, a fire strikes without a warning, even during periods of enjoyable visits. Guests should be informed about the smoke detectors in each room, location of the nearest fire exit from any room (which should be no more than four doors away), that the fire extinguisher can be found next to the elevator on every floor, and the fire can be reported by dialling “0” for the hotel operator. This will let the guests know that the hotel is serious of their well-being and that it has taken every precaution to make certain that the equipment is available and in working order. Management may want prompt the guests to read evacuation guidelines posted on the door of the guest room by offering captivating promotions. For example, during registration, the guest can be informed of the special coupon attached to the fire evacuation plan located on the door. This coupon may be used for a two-for-one breakfast special, or a free cover charge in the lounge, a free morning newspaper, a gift shop discount, or other similar incentives.

Hotel managers should also concern themselves with accommodation for the physically challenged guests. **Visual alarm systems**, flashing lights that point out a fire or other emergency in the hotel room, need to be installed to alert the guests with hearing-impairments. A report on the location of the physically challenged guests should be within easy access in case of an emergency.

Emergency Communication

At times all guests and employees are required to evacuate a building in nonemergency situations. While it is absolutely that the building is emptied, the evacuation is not as urgent as in case of a fire. Situations where such evacuations become necessary include a bomb threat, a fire in the next building, gas leaks, or in cases of power outages. In such cases, an emergency communication system needs to be in place to make certain of disciplined evacuation.

The director of security, in combination with the front office manager and civil authorities, should come up with a plan for every department. The task of the front office is vital in directing communications with guests and employees. It is the duty of the front office staff to alert guests and employees that there is an emergency. The emergency communication plan should set up a **communication hierarchy**, which lists the order in which management personnel can be assigned to take charge; stress cooperation between hotel and civil authorities; and make training available.

Developing the Emergency Communication Plan

The director of security, the front office manager and the civil authorities have to work together to establish an emergency communications plan. These are the individuals accountable for coming up with a plan that will be used in case of an impending life threatening emergency and it has to also include considerations for staff and employee trainings.

Responsibilities of the Front Office

1. Stay calm. Note down the name, phone number, affiliation, and location of the individual calling.

2. Immediately alert the emergency communications manager on duty to the impending danger. If the main telephone service to the hotel has been deactivated, use a cellular phone.
3. Inform the front desk clerk of the approaching danger. Produce a room list of all registered guests in the hotel. Produce a list of all social functions that are in progress.
4. Alert the emergency communications leaders on duty in each hotel department. These people will need to report to the front office at once. An emergency action meeting will be conducted with the emergency communications manager on duty. The lists of registered guests and social functions in progress will assist in the evacuation.
5. The emergency communications manager on duty will guide you as to which authorities should be alerted.
 - Police department: 000–0000
 - Fire department: 000–0000
 - Bomb squad: 000–0000
 - Electric company: 000–0000
 - Gas company: 000–0000
 - Water company: 000–0000
 - Rescue squad: 000–0000
 - Red Cross: 000–0000
 - Owner of hotel: 000–0000
 - General Manager: 000–0000
6. Answer all telephone inquiries as guided by the emergency communications manager on duty.
7. Stay at the front office to handle emergency communications until told to evacuate by the emergency communications manager on duty.

Employee Safety Programmes

The hospitality industry is loaded with chances of employee accidents. Behind the scenes there are numerous people squeezed in small work areas, busy getting food and beverages ready and carrying out other services for the guests. Those most in danger are employees with equipment needing repair, or who work in very congested areas and those depending on other employees who are not attentive to the job at hand. The front of the house too comes with opportunities that can lead to accidents. Employees and guests have to use public areas that might be congested or dilapidated from overuse. The below outlined information on hotel law offers insight to the innkeeper's obligations.

The innkeeper has to regularly inspect the facility to uncover hidden or dormant defects and then to eliminate or repair them. During the time repair is being carried out, the innkeeper must warn guests of the presence of danger and its location.

Further Reading:

- ✓ *Michael J. O'Fallon, Denney G. Rutherford, (2011), Hotel Management and Operations*