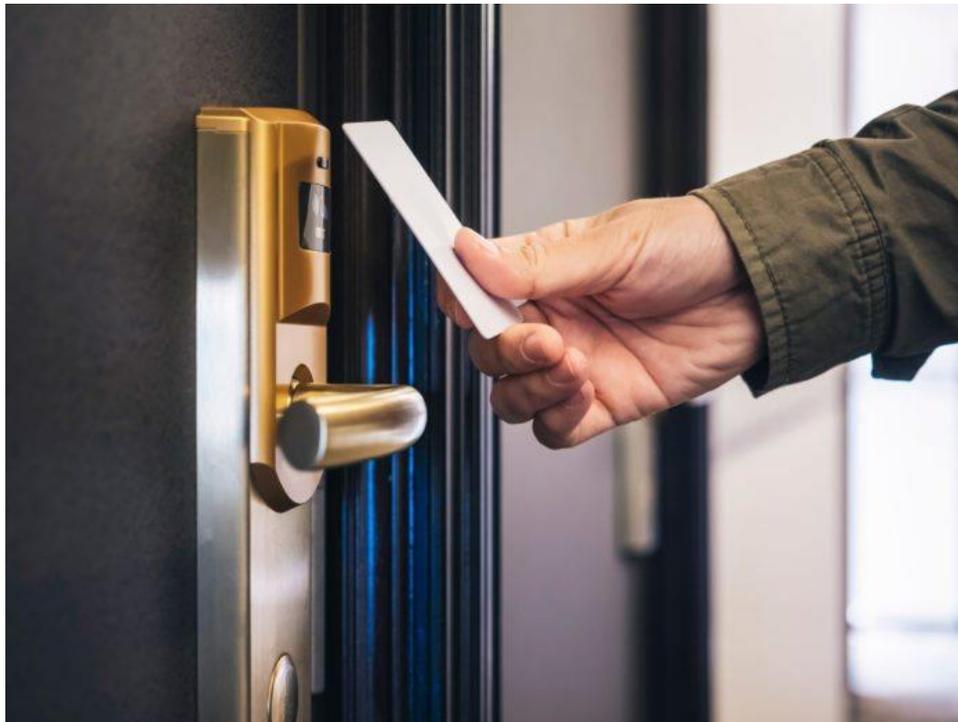


HOTELIER

HOW SAFE IS YOUR HOTEL?

By **Justin Parafinczuk** January 23, 2018



When guests are on vacation, they're looking to have fun. They don't want to constantly think about their safety. With the volume of traffic going through hotels, it's a given that guests are vulnerable to safety and security threats.

Recently, several horror stories have been reported referencing hotel issues — a guest trapped in an unlocked hotel freezer in Chicago, a front-desk clerk getting shot during an apparent robbery of a Texas hotel, and of course the Las Vegas tragedy. The threats are clear. However, many hotels have the tools, technology, and strategies needed to better protect patrons, employees, and properties.

There have been a number of negligent security claims that result from hotel management failing to implement or maintain adequate security measures. If an investigation by law enforcement reveals that management was aware of high-crime risks and did little to protect its guests, it is easier to prove negligence.

Security cameras, bright lighting and signs warning of potential danger are simply not sufficient. It's up to the hotel owner or manager to take every sensible precautions possible to ensure the reasonably safest property. Some steps to consider include:

- Employ a security expert. The potential for violence and crime is always prevalent, a security consultant can help identify weaknesses in your property's safety measures. By reviewing criminal activity statistics, or the "crime grid" available from most police departments, a security expert can help establish multiple protective measures.
- Enlist on-site security. If the crime grid reveals the presence of violent crime in the area, hiring a uniformed or armed guard or requesting increased police patrols can serve as a deterrent. Of course, added personnel raises costs of doing business. But one crime prevented can more than pay for itself in litigation and legal fees avoided.
- Diligence as a state of mind. Trying to identify weaknesses, spot criminals, or prevent crimes of opportunity, or behaviour that could put guests or employees in danger should become second nature. If a guest is consuming alcohol in public areas against the rules, or if a party upstairs is getting out of hand, it's critical to curtail the behavior before it becomes unsafe or ends with legal trouble.
- Is your establishment clean? Cleanliness also can boost safety. From the smallest scrap to large debris, remove litter, mop up spills, and repair uneven floor surfaces, doorways with low ceilings, or exposed wiring to prevent incidents and injuries.
- Who's watching whom? Surveillance cameras watched by hotel staff can help spot criminals or trespassers. Make sure your surveillance

team knows what they are looking at and for. Bright perimeter lighting and well-trimmed foliage can reduce hiding spots and improve guest safety, without sacrificing aesthetics. Moreover, signage prominently displayed and alerting people to the presence of video surveillance often can serve as a deterrent.

- Frequently run employee background checks. Criminal background checks are standard for many businesses. While some services are inexpensive, they may sacrifice accuracy. In court, you don't want to have news surface that you have an employee with a record of violent criminal acts. Back up the check with calls to references. Consult with your human resources attorney about what you can and cannot ask a candidate during an interview.

While recent violent episodes have hoteliers worried about their vulnerability to security threats, most of these can be prevented with the tools, technology, and strategies already in place. This can ensure patrons, employees, and properties alike are protected, and hotels are less vulnerable to claims of negligence.



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