**SAFETY AND SECURITY MEASURES IN HOUSEKEEPING**

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Housekeeping in a hotel is a very physically demanding job. The personnel are on their feet for a full shift of 8 hours during which they perform various tasks that are demanding for the body. Housekeeping has the largest workforce in the hotel. It is therefore, imperative for the Housekeeper to ensure safe conditions and practices in the department.

Managers must train employees to recognize potentially hazardous conditions and take corrective actions before they cause injuries like sprains, strains, falls;

                - Wet floors and slippery walkways

                - Messy floors

                - Equipment left out in the way

                - Improper lifting techniques

Best practices for handling chemicals, proper personal protective equipment selection, material handling, and slip, trip, and fall prevention are discussed. Readers will gain an understanding of how to identify at-risk situations and how to avoid serious injury or illness.

Housekeepers are exposed to a variety of hazards while on the job and perform a variety of tasks throughout their work shift. Proper training to identify hazards and risks associated with these tasks will help prevent employee injury

**Occupational Hazard**

1. Walking
2. Standing
3. Stooping
4. Squatting
5. Kneeling
6. Stretching
7. Twisting
8. Crouching
9. Lifting
10. Pushing

The above are only sample situations where the body is under pressure**.**There are countless number of other situations that truly challenge housekeeping personnel**.**

**Reducing the Physical Stress**

The question then arises, how we reduce the physical stress on housekeeping personnel. The following suggestions are useful to keep in mind.

1. Lighter equipment can reduce work. Heavy equipment must be on castors. Portability helps greatly in work management**.**
2. Modern Detergents help in cleaning with a swipe that may eliminate tedious scrubbing.
3. Job Rotation
4. Team Work.
5. Education and Training in safe work practices must be part of ongoing agenda.

**Work Hazards and Prevention.**

Let us examine the areas in housekeeping operation when accidents take place:

**Falls from slippery floors make shift ladders:** Put the sign “Wet Floor” this protects both the guest and staff. Ladders must be stable and strong, use aluminum ladders with rubber footing to prevent slippage. It is preferable to have someone holding the ladder from below. Employees must be prevented from using make shift ladders like packing crates and chairs.

**Cuts from broken glass in linen bundles and garbage:** Any heap of linen or garbage is a potential hazard for broken glass or exposed syringes. The cleaners must not put their hands in garbage heaps. Room dustbins must be emptied enmass into the garbage hamper. Room attendant shake the soiled linen for guest belongings, which is a good precaution as it ensures that broken glass or other sharp objects are not hidden in folds.

**Back Pains from improper working postures:** Back pains are a common complaint due to the pressure on their backs while doing their daily chores. The secret is to keep the correct posture. Correct posture balances the neck, chest and lower back. Back pains are caused due to lifting, bend at the knees and not at the waist. Use both hands while lifting and hold the items closer to the body.

**Breathing problems and burns from the use of hazardous chemicals and detergents:** Housekeepers normally use mild detergents for daily use. However potent chemicals like acids and potent detergents are unavoidable. Exposure to these chemicals cause nausea, allergy, burns vomiting breathing problems, skin rashes etc. Cleaners must be trained in the safe use of these chemicals. Suppliers often provide the training and safety manual in the use of these chemicals. Cleaners must be provided with goggles, gloves and masks for operations that involve the use of hazardous chemicals.

**Electrocution from live electric wires and improper maintenance and use of equipment:**Housekeeper must ensure the equipment she buys has the ISI stamp of safety. Employees are properly trained in the use of the equipment. The manufactures are the best people to provide the training. Machines with loose/ open wires/ broken plugs should not be used. When not in use the wires of the vacuum cleaner should be neatly rolled and placed with the machine.

Never operate electrical equipment with wet hands or cloths

Do not operate near flammable liquids, chemicals or vapors

Turn off them when sparks, smokes or flames are seen

Check the wires and connections periodically

Never unplug them by pulling the cord

Keep the cords out off traffic areas

When cleaning guestrooms, room attendants should check for frayed wires, loose connections, loose plugs, broken switches

 **Injuries due to improper work habits :**       Smoke only in designated area, never in the elevator. Ensure elevators are never overloaded. Use the correct equipment and accessories for cleaning. Use accessories like gloves, goggles, masks when dealing with toxic material. Look for broken glass when cleaning. Do not put bare hands into trashcans for they might get cuts by glass pieces or razor blades. Use handrails while climbing steps. Untangle cords of equipment before use and keep them away from pathways. Report on safety hazards if you cannot rectify. Rely on maintenance to complete fixing jobs. Check equipment for their serviceability.

**Working at height:** Any work which is carried above 5ft height requires a ladder. The ladder should be an A line ladder with the rubber shoes of the ladder intact and the center support in working condition.

Always use safety helmet and safety belt while working at height. The area should be cordoned off.

**Ladders;** when selecting a ladder inspect its condition, height and footing.

Do not use broken or defective ladder

Do not use aluminum or metal ladder when working near or on electrical equipment

Use rubber footing on tile floors and in kitchen

Floor must be dry and clean

Should be high enough

Never stand on the top step

Never place a ladder against a window or uneven surfaces

Should be well-balanced

When climbing, face the ladder and have clean and dry hands and feet

Mark the area underneath the ladder with caution signs

**Housekeepers Responsibilities towards safety are: -**

1. Prepare a safety manual that is read and understood at the time of induction of new employees.
2. Paste safety rules on walls at strategic points in the work area.
3. Reinforce safety rules in daily briefings.
4. Organize continuous safety training. Involve experts like the equipment manufacturers, Engineering to take classes on fire safety etc.
5. Have a Preventive maintenance programmed for all equipment.
6. Include safety inspection in the supervisor’s checklist.
7. Ensure that toxic chemicals are stored in closed cupboards and properly labeled.
8. Ensure that all waste disposal containers are leak proof and maintained in sanitary conditions. Waste disposal external to the building must be in designated municipal area and with concern for public health. The recycled items are put in their appropriate containers.
9. Make sure that locker rooms have proper washing and shower facilities. Locker rooms must be kept clean and dry at all times. Water closets must be sanitized frequently.
10. Ensure that housekeeping employees consume food and beverage in the staff canteens and not in public areas.
11. Ensure rest breaks for employees during their shift vigil.
12. Keep appropriate signs like “Wet Floor”; “Engineering at Work”, labels for detergents and toxic material, safety instructions on equipment, “
13. Not to stack anything in the corridors.
14. Fire exit staircase should always be clear, not to stack items which will obstruct the movement.
15. Ensure hot and cold indicators on the tap faucets.
16. In the rooms and corridor’s few lights should be connected to UPS.
17. Swimming pool pH and chlorine levels to be maintained.
18. Pool area no diving signage to be painted.
19. Bed corner to be covered.
20. Non - smoking zone signage.
21. Safety shoes for Engineering and Kitchen and Gum boots for Kitchen Stewarding.
22. Smoke detectors indicator light to blink at all the times.

First Aid

It is important for all housekeeping personnel to know about first aid as they could be the first ones on the spot to give immediate attention to a guest or an employee. It is a part of the overall Safety Programme.

The first step is to have a first aid cupboard or box in all the departments.

The cupboard should contain the following items:

* Clinical thermometer
* Cotton wool
* Bandage roll
* Band aids
* Sterilized gauze
* Rubber sheeting
* Tincture iodine
* Dettol
* Burn-ol
* Croc in tablets
* Aspirins
* Mercurochrome
* Antiseptic cream

**SECURITY IN HOUSEKEEPING**

We know that housekeeping personnel are spread across the hotel in pursuit of their cleaning and maintenance duties. They therefore become the ideal ‘eyes and ears’ of the organization to detect any security threats to the organization. The main security concerns are:

Lost and Found

Guest Theft

Employee theft

Bomb Scare.

**Guest Theft**

Guest takes hotel items as souvenirs. The hotel may not mind things like soaps and stationary are taken as the hotel may build such costs into the room rate. But items as towels and bathrobes are a serious concern because of their cost to replace them.

Housekeeping personnel take the following precaution:

1. Key Control: Limited access to guest rooms.
2. Suspicious Movements: Housekeeping personnel are trained to observe suspicious movements and report to security.
3. Departure Procedure: Train bellboys to give a quick glance at the room and bathroom before they remove guest baggage.
4. Standard Issues to Guest rooms: The ability to detect missing items is made possible by equipping rooms with standard number of items.
5. Entry/Exit point: A guest room has only one entry/exit door. Windows are secure. Room doors are provided with peepholes.

**WHAT THE HOUSEKEEPING DEPARTMENT CAN DO**

No other hotel employee has as much access to hotel assets and guest property as the members of the housekeeping department. No one is more sensitive to the problems of theft from hotel guestrooms than the honest attendant who is known to possess a floor master key to a guestroom that has just been robbed. There is this assumption that, because housekeeping has a key to the room, if anything is missing, the department is by default the culprit, but there are instances when thefts have been triggered from within the housekeeping employees. Housekeeping personnel have reach to all the areas of the hotel and have maximum knowledge of guest areas and public areas. Any terror activity can easily be planned in a hotel if one has help from the housekeeping department.

**Employee Theft**: As in the case of the guest, employees find that most of the items are useful at home. A hotel reduces pilferage by adopting the following precaution.

**Gate Pass:** An employee is required to posses a gate pass, issued and authorized by the head of the department when ever a hotel property is removed from the hotel.

**Spot Check:**  Security personnel conduct spot checks, of employee’s handbags at random to ensure that unauthorized items are not being taken out of the hotel.  Staff lockers are checked periodically. Uniforms are not permitted outside the property.

**Limited Access:** Employees have limited access to areas of the hotel. For example the engineering personnel can enter the room along with a room attendant; a cook cannot go up on the floor. Every department has specific uniform, and designated areas of work that limits them to their area of work. Only certain personnel are expected to go up to the guest floors. Another aspect of limited access is the authority to enter stores. The storekeeper and the helpers are permitted to enter the stores and are accountable for items received and issued.

**Par Stocks:** Room attendants have par stocks of items on their maid cart that have to be accounted for. Similarly, guest rooms have par stocks, where the room attendants are accountable for a set of rooms and they have to ensure the par stocks are maintained.

**Bomb Threats:** Terrorism is a concern for all public buildings. Hotels are prime targets. Housekeeping personnel are trained to report on suspicious objects, drugs, and excess money lying in the room, arms and bomb like structures to the security.