

Unit 202: Understand business success

Worksheet 9: Know health and safety requirements of hospitality organisations

What would you recommend a staff member do if they see a character acting suspiciously?

Describe how regular training and evacuation/fire drills minimise the risk to human safety:

Explain how vigilant staff can reduce the threat to guest safety:

Identify the three examples of major incidents within the hospitality sector:

1.

2.

3.

Identify three procedures to be followed in a major incident:

1.

2.

3.

Explain the actions a hospitality business can take to when considering a major incident:

Case 1: Fire!

While conducting a safety and security audit of a five-star hotel in Africa, we enquired how a firetruck would access the property in case of a fire. The main vehicle entrance design made entry for such a large vehicle extremely difficult. What is more, approach from the main gate would have the firetruck driving straight towards evacuating guests and personnel. We were thus shown a large metal gate at the border of the property that was secured with a chain and padlock. Our conversation with the hotel's security managers went as follows:

- Q: *"Who unlocks the gate in the event of a fire?"*
- A: *"One of the security guards."*
- Q: *"Which one?"*
- A: *"Er, someone."*
- Q: *"Where is the key?"*
- A: *"In the security office"*
- Q: *"Where, specifically?"*
- A: *"Er, in a drawer."*
- Q: *"When was the last time this gate was opened? Is it regularly maintained? How often is the lock checked?"*
- A: *"Really couldn't tell you. I think they check the gate sometimes."*

We then went to the security office. Unsurprisingly, no one knew whose responsibility it was to open the gate. It took 12 minutes to find the right key, which didn't work because the lock was rusted permanently shut.

Now, let's remember that this hotel was run by a leading international operator, and that fire must be considered one of the more predictable hotel emergencies. This particular emergency response plan can only be described as wholly inadequate. Had there been a fire at that hotel, the firetruck would have been a seriously delayed, which could have resulted in disaster.

The fixes are straightforward. There must be a designated security guard on each shift whose job it is to open the gate if needed. The key must be in an easily accessible but secure location and clearly marked. There must be a backup key at a secondary location in case the primary key is inaccessible. The gate must be regularly opened and maintained. The team must train the emergency procedure regularly, and regular audits must prove readiness or identify weaknesses that can then be addressed.

Case 2: Active shooter

Another example of poor emergency planning comes from a 300-key, five-star hotel in the Middle East. In this case, we were assessing the security control room's active shooter protocols.

- Q: *"What if you hear gunfire and see hostiles with weapons on your CCTV monitor. What do you do?"*
- A: *"Call the security manager."*
- Q: *"Why?"*
- A: *Blank stare.*
- Q: *"What then?"*
- A: *"I make an announcement on the PA system telling guests to evacuate, or to get into a room and lock the door."*
- Q: *"What then? What exactly are you going to say in that announcement?"*
- A: *"I will say what I need to say."*

So, we took him at his word and decided to do a simulation. After prepping the exercise, our security guard was sitting calmly at his desk when we started yelling, "Active shooter! Active shooter! Go, go, go!", banging around the room and generally putting him under pressure. Of course, nothing we did could ever come close to the stress of an actual hostile scenario; even so, the results were less than satisfactory.

He fumbled for the PA, forgot to press the button to open all channels, and then spoke rapidly and incoherently into the microphone. The words "attack", "lock" and "room" were just about all that you could understand. The rest was mostly stuttering, stammering and unintelligible noise.

This is not an effective emergency procedure.

Hotel security should have pre-recorded an active shooter announcement, as most do for Fire/Life/Safety incidents. Alternatively, the script needs to be written, printed in 44-point font, laminated, and stuck on the wall next to the PA. In times of high stress, unless you are highly trained your brain will not function normally. Even putting together a coherent sentence can be challenging.

Case study 1 or 2	
Briefly describe the case study	
What were the key issue?	
What could have happened if it were real life?	
What would you recommend happen to improve the response?	
How would you ensure the business was prepared for the situation?	
Any other comments	