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Marriott Launches Cleanliness Council, Hotel Cos. Update Sanitization Protocols

By **Donna M. Airoidi** / April 21, 2020 / **Contact Reporter**

The coronavirus outbreak has brought hotel cleanliness to a new, heightened level of attention, and hotel companies are responding with enhanced sanitation protocols and procedures. In addition, Marriott International on Tuesday launched the Marriott Global Cleanliness Council, which is developing new hospitality standards "designed to minimize risk and enhance safety for consumers and Marriott associates alike," the company announced.

The council is chaired by Marriott chief global officer of global operations Ray Bennett, who will receive input from internal leaders in housekeeping, engineering, food safety, occupational health and employee well-being, as well as from outside experts. Advisory members include Dr. Ruth L. Petran, Ecolab senior corporate scientist, food safety and public health; Dr. Michael A. Sauri, Adventist Healthcare infectious disease specialist; Dr. Richard Ghiselli, head of the School of Hospitality & Tourism Management at Purdue University; and Dr. Randy Worobo, professor of food microbiology in the department of food science at Cornell University.

The company also is introducing new sanitation technologies in the coming months, including electrostatic sprayers with disinfectants recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization to treat known pathogens. These will be used to clean and disinfect guest rooms, lobbies, gyms and other public areas. In addition, the company is testing ultraviolet light technology for sanitizing keys for guests and devices used by employees. The company already is using hospital-grade disinfectants for cleanings now done with increased frequency, and disinfecting wipes will be placed in each guest room.

To allay concerns about Covid-19 person-to-person contact, Marriott will install signage in its lobbies to remind guests to maintain social distancing protocols and will remove or

rearrange furniture to allow more space for distancing. It also provides contactless options for check-in and check-out, room access, requests and room service. It also is evaluating adding partitions at front desks and is working to provide masks and gloves available to employees. In addition, Marriott will install more hand-sanitizing stations at entrances to its hotels, near the front desk, elevator banks, and fitness and meeting spaces. For food safety, the company is enhancing sanitation guidelines and modifying operational practices for room service and designing new approaches to buffets. No additional information on these latter elements were available.

Marriott isn't the only hotel company to address the need to enhance cleanliness protocols.

Best Western has upgraded its cleaning methods and is moving toward a hands-free check-in using its mobile concierge and texting, according to a company spokesperson. In rooms, the company has removed items that may allow for the transmission of Covid-19, including decorative pillows, scarves, laundry bags, amenity trays, pens and notepads. For breakfast, more prepackaged options are available, and the use of bulk dispensers has been reduced.

Choice Hotels also has increased its cleaning products and protocols, with vendors offering training to meet these new standards, according to a company statement. It, too, has adjusted its food and beverage service to offer more prepackaged options.

Hilton Worldwide has increased the frequency of cleaning public areas and has continued the use of hospital-grade disinfectant and increased the use of hand sanitizers, according to a company statement. It also internally has shared with managed and franchised properties extra cleaning protocols, infection control guidelines and educational material for employees, according to a company spokesperson. Hilton also will continue to adjust its food and beverage service to comply with current food safety recommendations.

Hyatt Hotels Corp. also has enhanced its cleaning measures in public areas including lobbies, fitness centers, restaurants, gift shops and business centers, and engaged a third-party cleaning provider to conduct a deep cleaning across high-traffic areas of the hotel, according to a company spokesperson.

InterContinental Hotels Group has supplemented its health and safety resources with additional Covid-19 cleanliness guidance, training and information, including adding response teams to provide around-the-clock assistance at hotels and increased frequency of cleaning of public areas and high-touch points in guest rooms, according to a company spokesperson. The company also is reviewing food and beverage service.

Radisson Hotel Group is taking extra measures to ensure its hotels are following guidelines supplied by local departments of public health and the CDC. In addition, it is placing hand sanitizer dispensers and/or wipes in high-traffic areas and has enhanced cleaning procedures throughout the hotel with a focus on commonly touched areas.

(Update, April 22): Wyndham Hotels & Resorts has partnered with third parties, including Ecolab, to provide hotel employees with training on enhanced disinfection procedures, including enhanced food safety measures, and to provide industry-standard cleaning and disinfecting supplies, according to a company spokesperson.

HRS: Hotel Hygiene Label More Likely to Attract Business Travelers

By **Donna M. Airoidi** / August 26, 2020 / **Contact Reporter**

Since corporate lodging platform HRS launched its **Clean & Safe Protocol program** in partnership with Société Générale de Surveillance in June, more than 40,000 hotels globally have earned a "clean and safe" label, according to HRS. This includes hotels that have implemented their own hygiene protocols and had them certified by external partners.

The Germany-based company also said that as business travel bookings have begun to return, hotels with a "clean and safe" label are 35 percent more likely than those without the label to secure those bookings, according to an analysis of its booking data that began in early July. This result is in line with findings from an HRS survey in May that showed 86 percent of respondents said they would prefer hotels that had implemented or revised specific Covid-19 hygiene measures, the company noted.

Information from the label also is present in the shopping displays of some corporate booking engines, and the labels can be displayed by hotels on site and on their websites.

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HRS Partners with SGS on New Hotel Hygiene Protocol

By **Molly Dyson** / June 22, 2020 / **Contact Reporter**

Corporate lodging platform HRS has partnered with global inspection, verification, testing and certification company SGS to develop a new cleanliness program for the hotel industry that provides labels for properties that meet hygiene standards.

The Clean & Safe Protocol sets out standards for hotel cleanliness during the coronavirus pandemic and beyond, and includes recommendations from the World Health Organization, World Travel and Tourism Council and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as well as guidelines for meetings and groups as defined by the Research Institute for Exhibition and Live Communication.

According to HRS, a recent survey of its corporate clients revealed 86 percent will only consider using hotels that can demonstrate enhanced cleaning measures as travelers prepare to get back on the road.

Measures included in the protocol include improved hygiene services in public areas, guest and meeting rooms; extended infection prevention measures; guaranteed minimum distances; implementation of revised training programs for employees and suppliers; regular control and monitoring; and other measures.

According to Louis Fernandes, HRS managing director of Northern Europe, the Clean & Safe Protocol allows smaller independent hotels to follow a standard similar to programs being introduced by larger chains. "We will take individual protocols into account," Fernandes told BTN Europe, "but we wanted to provide a standard for all of our partners."

Hotels can receive a label that shows corporates they have met the standards set out in the Clean & Safe Protocol, with two distinctions available: "Self-Inspected," whereby properties can fill out an online assessment form that is then rated through an algorithm to determine if they pass or fail, or the "Expert Inspected" option, which involves a digital or onsite assessment by an SGS representative. Hotels that have implemented their own measures and had them validated by an external audit partner can also receive this label. The Expert Inspected label can be displayed in the property and on its website and marketing materials.

Francesca Cerchia, global product manager at SGS, told BTN Europe the company, which already partners with a number of hotels on both the property and chain level, collaborated with HRS to create 46 main questions for the Self-Inspected option.

Questions cover measures such as how often high touch-points are disinfected, which cleaning products hotels are using and what properties are doing to limit contact among guests and staff, particularly in public areas. "There's a certain level of flexibility built into the assessment because every property is different; we just wanted to develop a minimum level of protocols they should be following to reassure guests of their safety," Cerchia said.

Cerchia also said she believes the new protocols will be a permanent fixture in hotels. "I think it would only be social distancing guidelines that go away if we get a vaccine for coronavirus. Really, these standards should always have been in use, and I think they have but maybe haven't been monitored or vetted the way they will be moving forward.

Covid-19 is just one of many possible infections, and I think a lot of hotels already had plans in place for outbreaks."

HRS said there are already hotels in more than 40 countries listed on its sourcing and booking platforms with the Clean & Safe labels.

When asked whether he thought the certifications would go some way to reassuring travel managers and their travelers as businesses start to send employees back on the road, Fernandes said: "It depends on the company's risk attitude, and it would also depend on their sector. For instance, the oil and gas industry has fairly strict risk protocols because that's what they specialize in—keeping employees safe on the job—whereas other sectors might be a little more flexible.

"The point of Clean & Safe is to give both our hotel partners and our corporate clients the ability to choose what works for them. At the end of the day, the best way to fill rooms as hotels reopen is to gain consumer confidence, and we think the labels will help with that."

HRS chief executive Tobias Ragge said: "Covid-19 has fundamentally changed the world of business travel. In times of pandemic and beyond, corporate travel managers are rigorously weighing their duty-of-care responsibilities and traveler safety as their colleagues get back on the road to see clients and sell to prospects. Hoteliers around the world are investing significant amounts into new cleanliness procedures. We intend to make their efforts transparent, as this is needed to restore the sentiment of trust for business travelers and corporate buyers."

*Originally published in **BTN Europe***

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