

FIRE SAFETY IN HOTELS

The hotel industry has grown significantly in the past few decades. The increasing emphasis on development of tourism as well as the spread of industry and commerce has led to a large number of hotels coming up both in metropolitan cities as well as in small towns.

In recent times several serious fires have occurred in hotels all over the world resulting in large scale loss of life and property.

Hotels present special problems in fire and life safety. Some of the recent spectacular and tragic fires have occurred in hotels where the management ignored fire safety measures.

SUCH TRAGEDIES AND ACCIDENT CAN BE AVOIDED BY PROPER MANAGEMENT ACTION.

A few simple and inexpensive precautions can ensure the safety of lives and property and prevent such accidents in hotels.

Although there are some statutory safety regulations to which every hotel building should conform. The national building code 1980 formulated by the Indian standard institutions contain many guide lines to ensure adequate fire safety. Such guide lines relate

- a) Location of the building with respect to roads or adjacent building and open space around.
- b) Separation of living rooms from service facilities such as kitchen, laundry stores etc by fire resistant walls .
- c) Provision of enclosed pressurized stair cases, corridors assembly points and refuge areas equipped with fire proof doors
- d) Measure to prevent horizontal and vertical spread of fire and smoke during the construction of lifts, utility and drainage shafts, air – conditioning ducts etc.
- e) Use of furnishings, partitions lining materials and interior decorations that have low flame spread.
- f) Installations of fixed and portable fire detection and extinguishing systems, including hydrants hoses sprinklers and other automatic detection and warning systems.



- g) Provision of emergency lighting and power supply to facilitate safe exit and operation of fireman's lifts, fire pumps and other emergency appliances.
- h) Preparation of "Emergency Plan" that would lay down responsibilities assigned to employees during and after an emergency like fire.
- i) Safe location and installation of fuel storages, transformers, and other electrical equipment, air conditions plant, refuse and waste yards.

PLAN FOR FIRE PREVENTION

A successful fire safety plan has three important elements

1. Identifying the fire risks
2. Establishing a fire protection system
3. Maintain the system day to day to ensure its proper functioning.

FIRE RISKS IN HOTELS

A. KITCHEN

Kitchen is an area where fire and heat are in constant use and it has been a source of many major hotel fires. If fire breaks out in kitchen it may spread rapidly to other areas.

Therefore

- Instruct the staff not to over heat cooking oil/fat and to use gas, hot plates ovens with due care.
- Clean the chimneys, ventilation hoods and ducts periodically to prevent deposit of grease and oily matter that can ignite.
- Do not run the exhaust pipe of ovens or cooking ranges through stores or other areas
- Ensure that the kitchen is never left unattended\
- Kitchen staff should be used in the use of fire extinguishers.



B. CARELESS SMOKING

AVOID CARELESS SMOKING

Many hotel fires started because cigarettes, matches and pipes have been carelessly lighted or thrown about in waste bins or on floors. Fires have also started because the guests, while smoking in bed fell asleep.

Provide sufficient ash trays in rooms, corridors, and offices and request your guest to use them. Ensure that ash trays are not emptied into waste bins or rubbish containers. They should be emptied in separate metal containers and disposed. Advise your guests not to smoke in bed.

C. LAUNDRY

This is another area of high fire risk. Electric irons, washing and drying machines, as well as some of dry cleaning agents used can be a source of fire. Electric iron when not in use should be switched off. Dry cleaning agents should be used carefully minimum required should be kept in the laundry

D. CONTRACTORS WORKERS

Many a times maintenance work like welding, painting, or other repairs is entrusted to contractors whose workers may not follow any safety precautions. Install a work permit system which ensures that no contract work can be done without a written authorization. The authorization itself should be issued after a responsible person inspects the area, equipment used and the surroundings for fire hazards and makes them safe for work.

E. INTRUDERS

Fires are sometimes caused by unauthorized persons with malicious intrusions or due to tensions among personnel. Your system should include a method of keeping unwanted people out and to see that things that can be used to start a fire or kept out of the reach of intruders.

F. ELECTRICITY

Misuse of electricity and faulty electrical appliances are dominant fire risks. Leaving electrical appliances and equipment like irons unattended, plugging in too many



appliances into a socket, using a room heater for drying clothes are example, of misuse by careless staff and guests. These can easily result in fire.

Defective wirings, plugs, sockets and other gadgets are examples of faulty appliances that can easily lead to fire. If an appliance like T.V. Set behaving strangely or starts getting unusually warm, it is an indication that something is wrong. If an appliance looks or sounds wrong, smells or start smoking, your guests should stop using the appliance. Switch off unplug and report to your manager.

Get your electrical equipment checked periodically and maintain them in good condition

ESTABLISHING A FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM

The major area where management action is required are

- Provision of adequate number and type of portable fire extinguishers and fixed fire protection system.
- The warning should be distinct enough to be heard preferably through a public address system.
- Train all members of staff on what precisely each should do in the event of a fire give guest clear information what they should do on noticing a fire and how to escape safely from the building.

While the above are general guidelines, management should specially do the following.

- a) The guest on checking in should be given a printed card showing the means of escape and other instructions printed in different languages
- b) Restrict the number of persons admitted in certain specified areas like Banquet halls etc.
- c) Display a plan of the floor showing escape routes, location of telephones, fire alarm points, extinguishers etc.
- d) Provide adequate lighting in corridors, stair ways, exit signs and along escape routes preferably at ground levels.



- e) Regulate the entry, storage and use of hazardous materials like gas cylinders and flammable liquids
- f) Regulate activities like welding, cutting, burning of paint etc.

MAINTENANCE OF THE SYSTEM

The concern of management for fire safety should be made evident by continuous supervision and periodic inspection. The supervision should ensure that

- There is no imminent fire risk in parts of premises where activity is scarce (to be inspected every night)
- In corridors, passages and other places, fire doors, emergency exits and other escape facilities are kept unlocked and free from obstacles
- The operation of automatic smoke and fire doors are not obstructed (to be inspected last thing at night)
- All electrical appliances (particularly television sets) in public rooms are switched off and unplugged (last thing at night)
- Steps of external stairways and passages and balconies which form part of an escape route, are kept free from all obstructions and tripping hazards including storage, growing vegetation etc.
- Communication equipment (telephones, fire and other alarms etc) and extinguishing equipment (hose reels and fire extinguishers) are visible and accessible
- Signs indicating smoke and fire doors, communication equipment, extinguishing equipment, escape routes and other means of escape are clearly visible.
- Electrical installations wiring and plugs are kept in serviceable conditions.
- Fume hoods of cooking equipment are kept clean and grease traps and filters where fitted, are regularly inspected and maintained in a clean serviceable condition.



The following require periodic inspection

- Chimneys and flumes
- Ventilation ducts and fans
- Air conditioning plant (with ducts and valves)
- Heating and other installations, lift motors etc.
- Boiler and water heater equipment
- Fire detection and alarm systems (daily or weekly tests and annual inspection)
- Sprinkler and other automatic extinguishing systems (weekly quarterly tests and annual inspection)
- Wet riser systems including hose reels and branch pipes.
- Portable extinguishers (quarterly, half yearly, annual inspection and weekly visual inspection of sitting and availability)

FIRE PREVENTION RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GUESTS

The notice below should be displayed in public rooms and guest rooms. It should be translated into other languages where appropriate. The following suggested rules should also be displayed in guest rooms or given to guest when they arrive.

The management wishes you a pleasant stay. We assure you of our care for you safety and well being and ask you in your own interest to take note of the following instructions.

1. The portor showing you to your room will indicate the ordinary as well as the emergency passages. Particularly the escape routes in case of emergency.
2. In case of fire you can leave the hotel via the stair case. The emergency controller will instruct you by loud speaker when to leave the hotel.
3. On the out break of fire, or if you will smell smoke, please notify the switch board at once by lifting the receiver of your telephone. Please indicate clearly the number of your room and your observations.



4. Do not act rashly and do not expose yourself to any unnecessary danger by leaving your room, you might be safer in your room than any where else.
5. On leaving the room shut all windows and doors to avoid any draught.
6. If the fire – brigade appears do not get upset. Follow their instructions.
7. Carrying and using materials and liquids constituting a fire hazard are not allowed.
8. Electrical equipment must not be adjusted or alerted without the prior permission of the management.
9. Do not smoke in bed. Do not throw stubs into the waste paper basket or through the window. Extinguish them in the asy tray.
10. Find out the nearest escape route(s) from your room.

“ Panic is more dangerous than Fire”

Fire Prevention rules for staff. Every member of the staff should familiarize himself or herself as quickly as possible with

- The layout of the building, its corridors and exits, stairs and lifts, the guest rooms and the service premises including cellars lofts and other storage rooms.
- Corridors, stairs and exits of all the escape routes.
- The location and operation of extinguishing devices such as hose reels and fire extinguishers, communication equipments (telephone, fire warming and alarm systems)
- The correct action, if you discover fire or if the alarm is raised by someone else .

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Every member of the staff should observe the following rules.

- No refuse or wrappings to be thrown or left anywhere except at the points intended for this purpose



- Ash trays to be emptied regularly and always at closing time into metal ash bins with hinged covers. Smoldering or burning materials should be first extinguished. The contents of the ash tray should never be emptied into refuse bags.
- Corridors, stairs, steps and other escape routes to be kept free from obstacles (such as baggage, wrappings, cleaning and maintenance materials) which obstruct the escape route path and/or render alarm equipment extinguishers, arrows or signs indicating fire exits invisible.
- Fire and smoke doors must not be kept open
- In places where lighting is required at night it should be turned on early and any faults in the lighting equipment should be reported at once to the management.
- Faults electrical equipment fire alarm and extinguishing equipment and door gear should be reported at once to the management.
- No smoking or naked lights where smoking is forbidden.
- Except with permissions of the management and a work permit agreed by them, no work such as welding may be done involving any fire hazards.

TRAINING

Every staff member should take part in instructions and training exercises on

- How to raise the alarm if a fire occurs and how to use the extinguishers and other first aid fire fighting equipment provided.
- Assisting in the evacuation of guests in the event of fire

ACTION IN THE EVENT OF FIRE

Every staff member should take immediate action in the event of fire to

- Raise the fire alarm
- Notify the fire brigade through the receptionist
- Warn the management, staff and guests



- Assist in the evacuation of guests, paying particular attention to physically challenged elderly, very young and ladies who are carrying, and inspect all rooms for straggler(Do not use lift)
- Shut doors and windows tightly
- Attack the fire with suitable extinguishers, but only if there is no risk of injury
- Carry out his or her special task or tasks.
- When a fire is reported, reception staff will normally be responsible for calling the fire brigade and making sure the management staff and guests are alerted, they should also
- Provide the fire brigade, when they arrive, with any information they may require on the location as well as the type of fire and of any trapped people. The brigade should be quickly guided to the spot.
- Keep the telephone lines clear for essential calls.
- Take the hotel register to the assembly point if the reception staff has to leave the reception.
- When a fire is reported, reception staff will normally be responsible for calling the fire brigade and making sure the management staff and guests are alerted.
- “The above information on Action in the event of fire” should be incorporated in a concise, clear notice which should be placed near alarm points and telephone available to the staff.

FIRE PREVENTION ADVICE FOR KITCHEN STAFF

OIL PAN FIRES

Turn off fuel

Cover pan with a suitable fitting cover

If the fire persists use suitable fire extinguisher

Never use water



FIRES INVOLVING LP GAS

Stop gas supply by closing valves provided on cylinders. Use Aluminum blanket for smothering small flames and alumnised gloves to close the valves.

GENERAL HINTS

Keep suitable pan covers within reach.

Extinguishers should be within sight, available at all times and should be regularly maintained.

Read regularly the instructions on the extinguishers to make yourself familiar with their use and types of fire on which they should not be used.

SPECIMEN NOTICE TO STAFF

Fire Rules

If you discover a fire:

Raise the alarm by breaking the glass of the nearest fire alarm call point

Attack the fire with the equipment provided. If you can do so without undue risk

IF YOU CAN HEAR THE FIRE ALARM

Rouse the guests under your charge or make sure that they have been roused.

Leave the premises with your guests by the nearest available exit. Close all doors behind you. Report to person in charge at the assembly point.



YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

To know how to find the escape routes provided.

To know how to operate the fire alarm

To know how to use the fire fighting equipment

Call the Fire Brigade

Do Not:

Use lift as a means of escape shout or run this tends to cause panic

SPECIMEN NOTICE TO GUESTS FIRE RULES

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE

Raise the alarm by breaking the glass of the nearest fire alarm call point. The nearest call point to this room is at -----

IF YOU HEAR THE FIRE ALARM

Leave your room immediately and proceed to the assembly point at ----- by the nearest available exit. Your primary escape route is ----- close the door of your room and other which you use.

DO NOT

Use lift as a means of escape shout or run this tends to cause panic.

Study this notice carefully so that you know what to do in an emergency

REFERENCE

1. Loss prevention of India LTD
2. Hand Book on Bench Mark Security at Hotels



FIRE SAFETY CHECK LIST FOR HOTELS

| | YES | NO |
|--|------------|-----------|
| Are the safety instructions for action in case of fire posted in sufficient numbers where they can be seen? | | |
| Is the evacuation plan posted in every room? | | |
| Do you have automatic fire detection system? | | |
| Do you have automatic water sprinkler fire extinguishing system? | | |
| Do you have a contract for the annual maintenance and repair of the sprinkler | | |
| Do you have a manual fire alarm (MCP) | | |
| Do you have an internal alarm system in each room | | |
| Are the lifts provided with firemans switch for the use of professional fire fighters? | | |
| Are the building construction furnishings and decorations non – combustible? Inflammable with difficulty? | | |
| Are the building construction furnishings and decorations non – combustible? | | |
| Are the exit passage ways clearly indicated by means of self luminescence markers? | | |
| Do you have an emergency electro-generator installation? | | |
| Is it inspected once a week? | | |
| Does the official fire department conduct regular inspections of your establishment? | | |



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| Is there an emergency evacuation plan? | | |
| Are these fire hydrants or water supply connectors insufficient number? | | |
| Are these inspected regularly? | | |
| Are there fire extinguishers at all strategic points? Corridors ? Kitchens ? Heating Installations ? Computer Centres ? Technical Installations ? | | |
| Are these inspected annually under a maintenance contract? | | |
| Is there a person responsible for safety? | | |
| Is there an In House Fire fighting Team ? | | |
| Is this team trained regularly (1-3 times) a month ? | | |
| Have all the other employees received basic fire safety training? | | |
| Is the building compartmentalized for purposes of fire safety? | | |
| Do you have regular liasoning with fire fighting/law enforcement agencies? | | |

