2/2. HOTEL SECURITY & SAFETY

SAFETY IN THE HOTEL

Safety aspects may include:

a) Fire prevention and control
b) Accident prevention-guests & employees
c) Dealing with sickness of guest
d) Death of a guest

1. FIRE

A. CAUSES OF FIRE AND PREVENTION:

Most fires start because of carelessness of staff and guests. Newspapers, periodicals or clothes left lying too close to a fireplace, misuse of electricity by overloading, using faulty equipment, covering of lamps and heaters with damp clothes, etc. could be some common causes of a fire in the hotel.

Cleanliness is fire’s natural enemy and good housekeeping practices should be followed throughout the establishment. Here the housekeeping plays an important role in preventing fire by providing adequate and proper ashtrays, dustbins, fireproof furnishings, and proper collection and disposal of rags and rubbish. Combustible material must be stored properly as also all chemicals used. Proper equipment and periodical maintenance of these is very important to prevent dangerous failure or short circuits.

In guestrooms, maids should be instructed to keep a lookout for hazardous material left by the guest- a travel iron left on, covering of lamp shades with damp clothes left to dry, etc. In kitchens the exhaust hoods should be cleaned regularly. In public areas, enough sand ashtrays should be located at strategic points. Fire alarms and exit signs should be connected to an emergency electrical supply.

General Causes of fire and prevention:

- **Smoking:** no smoking should be allowed in restricted areas. All cigarette ends must be extinguished completely. Adequate ashtrays should be provided.
- **Electrical:** regular checking and maintenance of electrical appliances. Regular checking of building wiring. Train staff not to use faulty equipment. Do not permit overloading of electrical outlets.
- **Heating equipment:** use fire guards where possible. Position fire away from furnishings or inflammable material. Apply fire retardant finishes to all furnishings.
- **Storage of chemicals:** all chemicals, including cleaning agents, must be stored in special stores. Inflammable liquids should be stored in dark coloured bottles away from naked light or direct light.

All hotels and boarding houses have to be covered by the **Fire Prevention Act 1971**, wherein all hotels providing sleeping accommodation for more than 6 persons-guest or staff- have to be covered by this Act. In case of hotels providing sleeping accommodation for less than 6 persons, but where this accommodation is above the first floor and below the ground floor, they also have to be covered by this Act. This Act makes provision for adequate means of escape and related fire precautions in places of public entertainment, recreation, instruction, etc. before a fire certificate is issued by the fire authority the following requirements must be satisfied:
a) Means of escape- escape routes being provided and safely maintained, unobstructed routes, use of emergency lighting, clear signs to exits, etc.
b) Fire fighting equipment- different types as required by nature of activity in location
c) Means of giving warning of fire
d) Staff training
e) Fire detectors- smoke or heat
f) Instructions to guests

The front office may be given the responsibility of monitoring fire alarms and alert systems. A good management will formulate a plan for possible fire emergencies and train staff accordingly.

The plans should include:

- Emergency escape procedures and route assignments
- Procedures to be followed by employees who remain to operate critical hotel operations before they evacuate
- Procedures to account for all employees after evacuation
- Rescue and first aid duties for those employees who are to perform them
- The preferred means of reporting fire and other emergencies
- Correct way of informing guests
- Names or regular job titles of persons or departments who can be contacted for further information or explanation of duties under the plan

Other points include:

- Adequate fire alarms and fighting equipment are required to be in place, such as, smoke detectors, fire sprinklers, fire extinguishers, etc.
- The local fire department is required to check and pass these periodically and may also assist in training employees in fire procedures.
- All personnel should be well acquainted with the position of fire alarms, location of exits, extinguishers and alarms throughout the hotel.
- They should be trained in the use of appropriate extinguishers. The time to start reading directions is not during the fire!
- Guests may be informed at check-in that all rooms are equipped with smoke detectors, that the nearest fire exit from any room is four doors to the right of the room; that a fire extinguisher is located next to the elevator on each floor; that a fire can be reported by dialing “0” for the hotel operator and so on. The guest will appreciate that the hotel cares about their well-being.
- Guests may also be encouraged to read the fire evacuation guidelines posted on the door of the guestroom.

B. FIGHTING FIRE:
To start and spread, a fire needs fuel and oxygen. If you exclude one of these elements, the fire can be restricted and extinguished.

F = Find
I = Inform
R = Restrict
E = Extinguish
The above anagram is useful to remember when dealing with a fire on the premises. However, preventive steps must be taken to prevent the occurrence of a fire in the first place.

The following are some means of prevention of fire employed by hotels:

- **Water sprinklers**: is a system of pipes built into the building and connected to the main water supply. The sprinklers are located at regular intervals. When the temperature rises above a predetermined ‘safe’ level in an area, the connection to the water supply melts, causing the water to sprinkle and bring the temperature down, thus helping in the initial control of fire.

- **Smoke alarms or detectors**: these are also situated in the ceilings of rooms, corridors and all public and back of the house areas at intervals. As soon as they detect a great amount of smoke in the air, it gives off an alarm at a central location- front office, telephones or maintenance dept...

- **Manual Alarms**: are situated at regular intervals in various locations on the premises. They are set off individually by the person discovering the fire. It is also linked to a central indicator which will show the location of that alarm ensuring quick action form the management. It may also be linked to the local fire station.

- **Fire escape routes**: a safe means of escape will be required from each floor and every part of the building. This includes installation of fire escapes, and escape doors (fire resistant).
  - **Fire doors**: these are fitted to rooms and fire exits routes. These doors are treated to resist fire for different periods- for half hour, one hour, etc. The fire exit doors to escape routes should be self-closing and should never be locked. These should be boldly indicated.

- **Escape drills**: an organised procedure must exist in the event of a fire. It should be known to all staff and mock drills should be held periodically. This helps control panic and helps save lives.

- **Emergency lighting**: this must be provided on a line independent of the main supply. All exit signs should also be linked to this so that these work even in the absence of the main power source. These signs should be illuminated during the day as well as at night-24 hours.

In the event of fire staff training should include:

- a) Procedure in the event of a fire
- b) The location of exits and escape routes
- c) The location and use of fire extinguishers

**Procedure in case of fire**: In case of an actual fire breaking out, staff should be trained to follow this procedure:

- ✓ Activate the alarm
- ✓ Inform the telephone dept/maintenance dept./security dept. as instructed giving a quick and accurate description of the location and extent of fire. They will inform the fire brigade
- ✓ Vacate the building aiming for the ground floor, using an appropriate route, closing all doors and windows near you or the affected area as you leave. (If in an elevator, stop the elevator and lock it so no one else can use it and reach the fire exit route)
- ✓ Tackle the fire if no personal risk is involved

**OTHER THINGS TO DO:**

- ✓ If no personal risk is felt, one can ascertain the extent and seriousness of the fire by feeling the door, etc.
- ✓ Also, if it is safe for you, the guest can also be evacuated into the corridor and guestroom doors should be closed to contain the fire.
✓ It is important that staff in contact or dealing directly with guests and other employees in this situation should keep their calm and not create mass hysteria.
✓ Remember that smoke created by a fire is a greater killer than the direct flames of the fire. So adequate instructions should be given to guests to protect them while following the needful procedure yourself- covering the nose with a wet cloth and crawling on the floor towards the exit as smoke tends to be at a higher level, etc.
✓ Switch off all exhaust fans, etc. if any present around you as in kitchens.
✓ Do not break windows, these let in more air and oxygen to fan the fire and the broken glass can hurt people below
✓ Do not jump out of windows of higher floors.
✓ Help children, elderly people and physically challenged persons out of the building.
✓ Take a guest count and employee head count to know the number and names of missing persons.
✓ After the fire, open and check every room for anyone trapped inside and take an account of the loss of property.

VERY IMPORTANT FOR FRONT OFFICE PERSONNEL:
✓ In a fire, the front office has important information of occupied rooms and should help in carrying out a guest count to know who is safe and which guests are not traceable yet.
✓ They will also act as a centre of information for all queries regarding guests, employees and the progress in dealing with the fire.
✓ They may even help in directing the wounded to medical services provided in or around the hotel.
✓ It is also important to fill in a report of the fire/incident report, however small, and submit to the management. This will help in any investigations and follow-up that will be done and will help in preventing and dealing with other incidents more effectively.

C. FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT:
Fire fighting equipment should be located and maintained in strategic locations as specified by the fire department and staff should be trained in their use. Depending upon the nature of the fire there are different extinguishers available to put them out.

There are basically three classes of fire:
(Classes of fire and type of extinguishers)
  a) Class A fire these involve ordinary combustible materials- wood, paper, cloth, etc. these are extinguished with water or soda acid type of extinguishers
  b) Class B fire these are related to fires in inflammable liquids, grease and chemicals. These are controlled by blanketing the source with foam of carbon dioxide or dry powder or foam type of extinguishers
  c) Class C/E fire these are related to electricity-short circuits, etc. a non-conductive extinguishing agent is required to deal with this- carbon dioxide or dry powder types can be used

2. ACCIDENT PREVENTION FOR GUESTS AND EMPLOYEES:

Accidents, illness and death are some emergencies that may affect guests and employees from time to time and it may be the business of the Housekeeping dept. and Front Office to deal with them.
✓ All employees should have knowledge of first aid and in any such situation they should be level-headed, calm and not give in to panic and confusion.
✓ It should also be stressed upon staff that there should be no loose talk or gossiping and rumour mongering with other employees or guests.
✓ Nearly all hotels have a resident doctor or resident nurse (large hotels) or a doctor-on-call (small hotels) and he can be contacted when required.
✓ An ambulance can also be available in an emergency.

Accidents: accidents can occur anywhere and at any time and in a hotel, the likelihood of accidents occurring is even higher because of the amount of human traffic that moves through it. These accidents may involve guest or staff.

➤ All accidents have to be dealt with quickly without panic and keeping the interests of the hotel management in mind.
➤ The housekeeping department is normally responsible for dealing with First Aid and must maintain a first-aid box for dealing with such incidents.
➤ It also makes sense to maintain first-aid facilities or box in areas more prone to accidents such as the kitchens and the maintenance departments.
➤ The services of a (house) doctor should be available whenever required.

Accidents can be avoided if enough thought and action are devoted to their prevention. This prevention depends on:
1) Staff training
2) Hazard reporting

1. Staff training: this should include a course especially concerned with safety matters and safety training relevant in the hotel.

2. Hazard spotting/ reporting and prevention: all staff has the responsibility related to health and safety of workers and guests. There should be a Safety Committee that meets regularly to discuss the various factors.

Common Causes of Accidents:

a. Falls: these may be due to:
i. Objects and equipment left in the corridors, etc.-- so, remove potential hazards out of the way. Store idle equipment properly in a safe, designated place.
ii. Spillage on the floors: wipe up all spills at once.
iii. Poor floor maintenance procedures: cordon off or segregate the area where floor maintenance is being carried out —such as lobby cleaning in the night shift— and use warning signs. Also, highly polished floors cause slipping.
iv. Climbing on unsafe ladders: Ensure that the ladder is in good condition and placed safely and securely against the wall.
v. Loose carpet threads, banisters, etc.: repair these as they occur.
vi. Unsafe surfaces: avoid climbing on furniture and ledges.
vii. Over-reaching: Use safety precautions and equipment when reaching high access areas or out-of-reach spots.
b. Back Strain: this may be due to incorrect carrying of heavy loads; pushing of heavy loads; overloading of trolleys; etc. Check and maintain trolley equipment, never overload it. Train staff in correct methods of lifting and carrying of heavy articles.

c. Cuts and bumps: these occur due to opening of doors, overloading of trolleys, careless handling of sharp material- knives, scissors, broken glass, etc. Dangerous equipment should be stored carefully and used carefully. Wear gloves when handling dangerous waste.

d. Burns, scalds, inhalation of gases and fumes: occur when hot liquids are handled without adequate precautions. When using chemicals, work in an open ventilated area, wear protective gloves, etc. Do not mix chemicals and label and store them safely.

e. Falling objects: Equipment falling from a height such as ladders and staircases can be very dangerous. So, all equipment used at higher levels should be secured carefully. On staircases keep all equipment near the wall, away from the banister area. Warning signs must be placed on the floor below an area being repaired or cleaned, etc.

f. Electric shocks: this is due to use of faulty equipment and unsafe practices when handling any equipment. Turn off the appliances before disconnecting. Do not pull on wires or flexes. Use correct fuses and never overload equipment or electrical outlets. Immediately report and repair faulty equipment and follow a regular maintenance schedule.

Other precautions can include:

- Kitchen floor areas should always be grease free- avoids slipping and fires.
- All staircases, especially fire exit areas, should be free from storage articles- ladders, stools, etc.
- All corridors, corners should be well-lit.
- In all depts. every item should have a designated storage place. Things left around cause accidents.
- Light switches should be located at the entrances for easy accessibility.
- Staff should be instructed and checked to always follow all procedures and safety precautions.
- Staff should also be trained periodically in first-aid procedures and only trained first-aiders should handle an injured person.

Guest Accident Prevention:

Guest safety is of great importance for the hotel management and efforts must be made to keep these to a minimum.

Safety in the bathrooms and guestrooms: these are more prone to accidents because of the presence of slippery, wet surfaces so,

- Keep bathtubs very clean- do not allow build-up of scum (soap) deposits
- Place rubber or anti-slip mats in the bathtub
- Provide grab bars in tubs and shower cubicles
- Keep tiles dry
- Hair dryers should be wall mounted to prevent falling into water in the sinks
- Clear broken glass as quickly as possible
• Windows should be kept locked to avoid falls
• Wipe up all spillages on the floor as quickly as possible
• Place warning signage wherever housekeeping may be working, especially on floor maintenance

Procedure in case of an accident:
1) If possible remove the accident victim from the site of accident as soon as possible to a quiet secluded place. Make him comfortable, use a stretcher in case it is needed.
2) Preferably, take someone with you to the accident site and to help in handling the person.
3) Call the hotel doctor if the need is felt.
4) Handling of the accident victim should preferably be done by a trained first aider till the arrival of a doctor. Never try to move an accident victim who seems to have suffered a fracture- seeing an unnatural angle of the limbs, or if guest is in too much of pain, etc.
5) Keep calm, but don’t take too much time to decide on any action, time lost may be important.
6) Try to protect your establishment against any false allegations later.
7) Making a full report when the event is recent and fresh helps here. This record needs to be maintained by management in case of any queries later on or if the guest blames the hotel later on.

This Accident Report Form or Accident Book (also referred to as the Incident Form) should be available at the front desk and should contain the following information:
• Date and time of accident/incident
• Who reported the accident
• Room number of guest
• Site of accident
• Action taken (first-aid and doctor’s treatment and if person was removed to hospital
• Names and statements of witnesses
• Your own comments as to the reason of accident and how it could be prevented and what actions can be taken for future prevention of the same. (see format)

3. Guest Illness:
✓ When a guest or staff does not feel well, the housekeeper should be informed.
✓ She may visit the guest/staff, enquiring of his welfare and seeing what needs to be done towards their treatment. It also reassures the patient.
✓ The front office should also be informed so that they too can follow up on the condition of the guest from time to time.
✓ If the hotel doctor feels that the patient should be moved to hospital the guest is advised so, and if he agrees, then he is moved to a hospital- maybe of his choice.
✓ The guest is required to pay for the hospitalization expenses.
✓ The front office must maintain a list of specialist doctors along with their phone numbers and addresses. If the guest desires, they may be contacted and the guest pays for their services. The services of the hotel doctor may not be charged for.
✓ In case of a notifiable or communicable disease, the doctor will advise removing the person to a hospital.
✓ In this case the room may have to be fumigated and thoroughly cleansed and proper clearance and authorisation will be required from the housekeeping, maintenance and the FOM before the room is released for new guests.
✓ Also, the relatives of the patient will have to be informed by front office.
4. Death of guest:
✓ In case of death of a person on the premises, the lobby manager and security should immediately be informed, usually by the housekeeping.
✓ The FOM or Resident Manager and the GM must be informed. The hotel doctor would be required to confirm the death.
✓ The room’s air conditioning or central heating would be switched off and the room sealed to prevent entry of unauthorized personnel.
✓ The hotel will locate the residential address of the guest and inform his relatives, etc. a death certificate should be taken from the doctor.
✓ In all circumstances, especially doubtful circumstances, the police will need to be called for further investigations.
✓ When allowed by the doctor or police, the body will be removed.
✓ To avoid needless unpleasantness from spreading amongst the guests the body is removed through the service elevator and back-of-the-house.
✓ Staff should be instructed not to gossip needlessly with other employees or guests.
✓ An incident report should be prepared covering the details of the occurrence of death - time, room number, steps taken, etc.
✓ In case there is luggage and other belongings of the guest, these should be collected, a list prepared and the items placed in the luggage room with a note and the signature of the person performing this activity must be recorded as well. The incident report should be submitted to the management.

Remember:
❖ Do not enter the room alone- always take the lobby manager and security officer with you.
❖ In case you know that the deceased guest was under the treatment of a specific doctor, that doctor should be called and not the hotel doctor.
❖ Do not disturb or touch anything before the arrival of the police- it may be a murder or a suicide.

4. Miscellaneous situations:

Handling a drunken guest: a drunken guest is normally not in his senses and may not be talking coherently and may even be a little aggressive and loud. It is advisable never to argue with him. Try and escort him to a more secluded area or to his room - at least away from the lobby where he may make a nuisance for other guests also. Try not giving any offence in removing him from there. Be tactful. If he behaves aggressively, call the hotel security. In his room, he may be offered a pick me up to sober him down.

SAFETY & SECURITY WITH RESPECT TO HOTELS IN GENERAL:
1. Every floor should have at least two exits.
2. The emergency staircase should connect at least 3-4 outlets in a hotel.
3. Directional sign boards (visible) should be placed at each entry and exit point.
4. Every guestroom should have a visible emergency exit map or plan behind the door and this should never be concealed with any kind of decoration.
5. Fire extinguishers should be placed at all convenient points.
6. Water sprinklers and smoke detectors or a well planned fire plan should be a part of every hotel design.
7. Metal detectors or baggage scanners can be placed at the main entrance to prevent entry of unauthorized material.
8. Each and every room door should have a ‘peephole’/ eye hole for the occupant in a convenient location.
9. Every exit area should open into an open area.
10. Concierge and reception should be located at strategic points- a location from where the receptionist is able to view the movement from the main entrance. For this reason reception is located between the main entrance and the guest elevators.
11. The hotel’s parking lot should preferably be adjacent to the main building rather than in the basement. If this is unavoidable, the hotel parking lot should require the guest to cross the lobby and the reception area in order to reach the car park. CCTV surveillance is recommended for the car park area especially if in the basement.
12. Valet service should be suggested to single lady guests to avoid the occurrence of skippers and walk outs.
13. At the main entry of the hotel a rearview mirror may be placed in order to keep a check on the vehicles moving in and out of the hotel premises. Also, boom barriers may be installed to prevent unauthorized entry and exit of vehicles.
14. After the attack of 27/11, many hotels have started scanning and searching the underneath of cars and the car bonnets and car boot (luggage box at the rear).
15. Many hotels follow the policy of not sending their lady service staff- housekeeping and room service – to service rooms if the guest is inside the room.
16. A house maid should make sure to place the maids trolley at the entrance of the room to avoid any unauthorized or unsuspected entry of anyone while busy in cleaning.
17. CCTVs should be installed wherever necessary, especially at vulnerable points of the hotel.

NOTE: The important thing to remember in any unusual situation is that a report of the event/situation has to be submitted by each department involved so that the management may be able to keep the records and use these to assess the situation, the actions taken, the burden of responsibility and ensure such steps that will prevent or reduce the occurrence of such events in the future. (Accident/Incident Report Form)

Addendum:

RECOMMENDED EVACUATION PROCEDURES (USED IN HOTELS)

Every hotel today is required to have a plan for dealing with any emergencies, one of the most common one being the occurrence of a fire on the premises.

The management constitutes a team with specific responsibilities to deal with such events. This team may be called the RRT- Rapid Response Team or The ERT- Emergency Response Team

In the unfortunate event of an emergency, this team gets into action according to prescribed procedure already practiced in mock drills. The step by step procedure may be something like this (in the event of a fire):

1. Fire alarm goes off on the fire panels at Engineering and Security Control.
2. Engineering control informs Telephone Operator who informs Lobby Manager/Duty Manager.
3. Fire Crew comprising of Lobby Manager, Security Officer, Engineering Executive reach the site of the fire.
4. If fire is confirmed, Lobby Manager informs the General Manager.
5. The Fire Team, that is already designated, fights the fire.
6. If fire is beyond control, Director of Engineering advises General Manager to call the City Fire Service.
7. City Fire Service is called to assist.
8. General Manager decides to evacuate hotel.
9. Signal to start the “Evacuation process” - Announcement is made over the public address system.
10. Staff and guests are instructed to proceed with “Close down Procedures” and go to the designated “Meeting Point”.
11. Designated Hotel Evacuation Teams start evacuation.

Example of teams:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evacuation Team</th>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Meeting point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Fire Team</td>
<td>Engineering, Security</td>
<td>Engineering control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Assembly point Control Team</td>
<td>HR, Concierge, Bell desk</td>
<td>Lawn area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Guestroom Evacuation team</td>
<td>FO, Hk, Sales &amp; Mktg</td>
<td>Concierge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Front of House Control Team</td>
<td>F&amp;B service, Banquet</td>
<td>Business Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Back of House Control Team</td>
<td>Finance, F&amp;B(prodn), Stewarding</td>
<td>Receiving Bay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Exit Point Control Team</td>
<td>Security, Training</td>
<td>Security Control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

✓ Assembly Point Team Leader to handle casualties.
✓ Assembly point leader to ensure all hotel guests and employees are present at the Assembly point.
✓ Assembly point “All Clear” must be done - take a head count (physical count) of all people present.
✓ General Manager to ensure sufficient hotel coverage by assigning manpower.
✓ Fire team and security remain to assist.
✓ Evacuation team leader to organize transportation for all guests to alternate location.
✓ Evacuation Team leader to ensure that list of evacuated guests and employees are in his possession and all movement out of the hotel is controlled.
✓ Security to secure and close hotel until declared safe to open.
✓ Public Relations Manager/ Assistant to handle the Press using approved hotel statement.
✓ Post- event Action plan to be established.
✓ Necessary amendment can be made on the existing emergency evacuation manual.

Assignments: For journal and class discussion:
(Also, please use reference books, eg. Hotel Front office Operations & Management by R. Tewari, etc. for further information and formats.)

Q1. How would you deal with the following?

a. A fire on the guestroom floors reported to you at the front desk.
b. A guest slips on the floor in the lobby during public area cleaning in the night.
c. An in-house guest is mildly sick.
d. An in-house guest slips in the bathroom of his room and suffers a leg injury.
e. An in-house guest is reported to be dead in the room.

Q2. What is Risk Management Information System (RMIS)? Briefly explain its use in hotels.

Q3. What steps would a hotel take to prevent accidents for:
   i. Employees  
   ii. Guests on the premises

Q4. What plans should a responsible hotel management incorporate for preventing or handling a fire incident in the hotel?

Q5. Define first aid. Detail the contents of a First Aid Box maintained by the hotel.

Q6. What first aid should be provided for the following:
   a. Shock  
   b. Cuts  
   c. Fracture  
   d. Fainting/unconsciousness  
   f. Burns/scalds  
   g. Sprain

CRISIS HANDLING

Crisis:

A crisis can be defined as any event or situation that could harm a hotel’s viability and reputation. In a hotel it can be a fire, a theft, or a food borne disease or food infection, etc.

In any crisis, communications is a must. This must include the following:

1. Every property should be prepared with a crisis communication plan. This will provide a clear way for management to tell its side of the story and present the hotel’s image as professional, caring and concerned.
2. An audience with the press in the heat of the crisis may be the only opportunity to explain the steps taken to guard against such crisis and to show the property’s efforts to protect guests, employees and the community.
3. Providing information and cooperating with the press gives management some control over the way the crisis is reported. Otherwise, the reporters would get information from sources that have no reason to protect the hotel’s interests. Silence may imply that the property has something to hide.
   • Truthfulness is mandatory or it will destroy the hotel’s credibility before the press, the guests and the employees.
   • Guests and employees must be informed- making them aware of efforts to resolve the crisis reduces the feeling of helplessness, frustration and despair and can ensure their cooperation when needed.
   • Management must publicly express concern for the victims for any inconvenience, loss or harm caused by the crisis.
   • It is essential to designate a single spokesperson to communicate with the press. All employees must be asked to refer all questions to the spokesperson. This will ensure that the facts are reported accurately and consistently.

Guidelines for the designated spokesperson in a crisis:

✔️ Do not speculate- relate the facts only
✔️ Avoid speaking in jargon- present information in a straightforward, understandable manner.
Do not suggest possible causes of accidents or assign blame. Instead, stress on the efforts being concentrated on aiding the victims. Offer assurances that the situation will be investigated thoroughly.

Express managements concern for the safety of guests and employees and victims, before stating the concerns for the property.

Take the opportunity to state the hotel’s safety record and safety features and any precautions that had been taken to prevent the crisis.

Never answer a question with “No Comments”; always give the reason for not answering.

Never attempt to estimate the monetary extent of the damage in the midst of the crisis. Indicate that this will be estimated following a thorough investigation.

Steps towards the recovery from a crisis:

- Once the crisis is over, management must act immediately and fast to protect the hotel’s reputation and to inform the public that business is proceeding as usual.

- A prepared statement by the GM should stress on:
  - the cooperation and ready actions of the hotel’s employees (for their courage, efficiency in carrying through the plan);
  - Hotel’s policy in employee training for crisis management (stress on regular reviews, safety audits, etc.);
  - safety devices in the hotel;
  - appreciation to employees and guests for their cooperation and understanding or even courage during the crisis;
  - after a fire, the fire department and its role should also be mentioned

- The management must use all tools available to him to inform the public that it is back in business- a direct mail campaign to preferred guests, a special discount, or a ‘fam’ tour for travel agents or the press, etc.

KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER in crisis handling:

1. You must have an emergency plan.
2. The plan must include clear instructions to all staff as to what to do in the event of an emergency on the property.
3. Whenever possible, prepare a statement and make your remarks to the press clear and concise without speculation.
4. Always express concern for public safety before company profits.
5. Leave the facts of the crisis to the authorities.
6. Be sure to talk about your safety record and the monetary value investment made in any safety devices installed.
7. When the crisis is over, let the media know the hotel is back in business.