

CHECK-IN

with American Hotel Register Company

Focusing on issues important to all members of the Hospitality Industry

Check This Out

✓ The US Green Building Council (USGBC) reports that Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®)-certified buildings have the following typical annual savings:

- 30% – 50% in energy usage
- 35% in carbon emissions
- 40% in water emissions
- 70% in solid waste

The USGBC has found that a **limited-service hotel saving 30% to 50% in energy would realize the equivalent of increasing the Average Daily Rate (ADR) by \$1.80 to \$3.00**. A full-service hotel could raise ADR by \$4.00 to \$6.75.

✓ But even without LEED certification **properties can still save a lot of money**. In fact, the Colorado Springs Marriott announced this past April that it had cut annual electricity costs by \$57,000 without spending money. By turning off lights and air conditioners in rooms that weren't occupied, re-calibrating thermostats, and emphasizing staff training, the nine-floor, 273-room property utilized existing systems and equipment to reduce electricity consumption by 18 percent (815,000 kilowatt hours). Other simple steps included changing HVAC filters and cleaning belts and coils regularly so that equipment runs at peak efficiency.

✓ Energy-efficient **properties that have earned an "Energy Star" label** from the US Environmental Protection Agency are now featured on www.eco.orbitz.com. These properties use nearly 40 percent less energy than average buildings and emit 35 percent less carbon dioxide.

✓ The **Middle East's first women-only hotel has opened** in the capital of ultra-conservative Saudi Arabia. The 25-room hotel offers female-only guests spa treatments, fine dining, and conference facilities. Because women in Saudi Arabia usually cannot travel alone or socialize with men outside their family, a female-only hotel provides a safe and society-approved solution.

As our sales staff visits hospitality properties around the US, they let us know when they come across interesting stories and ideas.

Wanda Roland learned about a funny situation that happened at the **Park Inn, Birmingham, AL.** **Sandy McKee,**

GM, explains: "We had a group stay with us, and during their stay they played a game called 'Chicken Drop.' They place a number board in a cage with a rooster or chicken, and when the bird drops its poop, the number it lands on is the winning number.

"Well, on Saturday afternoon, someone let all four chickens and the rooster out of the cages. After about 45 minutes of chasing the animals around the yard, members of the group caught all of the chickens. But not the rooster. It went into the bushes by the air conditioner and then ended up in the holly bushes in the courtyard, so it was decided to leave the rooster alone for awhile. That night it went up near the

top of a tree. Someone climbed the tree and tried to get it down but the rooster just went up higher.

"On Sunday, they tried again to get it out of the tree but could not, so the rooster was left at the hotel.

"On Monday we called animal control, but they didn't have any luck

in getting the rooster down either. In the afternoon, it finally decided to come out of the tree, walk around the courtyard, and make noise as it looked for his friends. As of today (April 2) the rooster has still not been caught and is living in the holly bushes.

"For the past few days our guests have been asking about the rooster.

We just tell them he is our new, live, wakeup call system!"

Park Inn's new wakeup caller!



✿ Going Green Simply - Part 2 ✿

Here are six more tips to make "going green" easier for property staff at work and at home.

- ✿ Don't over-dry laundry. An ordinary household electric dryer operating an extra 15 minutes a load can cost up to \$34 a year in wasted energy — imagine how that adds up for an industrial-size dryer! Gas dryers are slightly less expensive to run.
- ✿ Plan for wise watering. Group thirsty landscaping plants closer to the building, more drought-tolerant plants that need less water farther afield. Mulch around trees and plants keeps water from evaporating.
- ✿ Don't over-fertilize. Plants can only absorb so much; the rest washes away to pollute waterways. Follow directions; try organic fertilizers, which release nutrients slowly.
- ✿ "Organic" should mean produced without chemical fertilizers, fungicides, or herbicides — but it's best to check. Products with an Organic Materials Research Institute (OMRI) seal have met a strict standard.
- ✿ Plant trees! They act like giant air filters. One mature tree takes care of the pollution caused by 13 cars.
- ✿ Usable stuff to give away? Check out www.freecycle.org. It's kind of an eBay experience, but without financial gain. The city-specific site allows people to post items they want to get rid of for others to pick up. No money changes hands!

Reader Responses Reader Responses

What change has your property made as the result of a guest's suggestion? **Ruth Knicely, Director of Retreats, Alpine Ministries, Bradley, WV**, writes: "One of our guests with limited mobility said that the water in the shower hit him in just one spot. He suggested that we replace our wall-mounted showerheads with handheld models in the handicap-accessible rooms so the waterspray could be moved and controlled as necessary. This was an inexpensive and easy change to make for the convenience and comfort of our guests."

In another of our Reader questions, we asked you what popular items tend to go missing, and do you ever get them back?

Diane Pouliot and Linda Benway, new owners of the **Casablanca Motel, Manchester Center, VT**, wrote: "Our property is unique in that we have ten individually themed cabins versus a traditional-style motel, and we pride ourselves on going the extra mile to make our guests as comfortable as possible. Our cabins include hair dryers, radio alarm clocks, small refrigerators, cable TV, free wireless internet, full baths,

Green Mountain coffee, along with comfortable and warm down comforters or blankets. Over the past year our hair dryers and comforters have been popular missing items. We have also had instances when all the room amenities have disappeared, from the soaps to toilet paper and tissues. To date, we have never recovered a larger missing item. Even after immediately inspecting a room after checkout, it still comes down to a 'they said/we said' contest. We notify everyone that stayed in the room about the missing item and politely ask that if the item is 'inadvertently' in their possession, we would be thrilled to have it returned, no questions asked. We stress how affordable and amenable we are, how we are on call and on-site 24/7, and that by providing these extra touches we think we are like the larger chains, but on a smaller scale. However, no one has ever returned an item, and it becomes a civil case that would probably cost more to fight than the pilfered item. We make a report to the local police just for the matter of record-keeping.

"While we love the thought that our guests enjoyed their stay even to the extent of wanting to bring a piece of us

home with them, we would still prefer to have our items left for the next guest. Perhaps we should all think like photographers: 'Take a picture' and leave the item in its native habitat!

Diane and Linda added, "We really enjoy the tips on green motels as we are currently in the process of becoming a green motel ourselves here in Vermont."

Good luck to Diane and Linda on their green motel endeavors!

Doris Gaub, Front Desk Manager, Christian Retreat, Bradenton, FL, wrote about a popular item that goes missing from her property. "We have an informational book in each room that tells guests about local attractions, food, and fun, as well as hotel information. I lose about thirty books a year. For most hotels this would probably be a small amount. However, we only have 135 rooms. So far no one has returned any of the missing books."

But a lot of people have nice souvenirs!

Your thoughts are worth \$25! Send them to us! All addresses are printed on the back page. Make sure to include your full name, property name, and address.

Maintenance news



Bill Pickens
Maintenance Editor

Choosing the Right Battery for the Job

A hospitality property has hundreds of upfront and behind-the-scenes battery power needs. At the front desk: pagers, cordless phones, calculators, wall clocks, and pencil sharpeners. In a typical guest room: electronic door locks, remote controls, smoke detectors, safes, deodorizers, clock radios. In maintenance and security: flashlights, two-way radios, pagers, penlights, remote entry car locks, power tools. In conference rooms: keyboards, audiovisual controllers, laser pointers, cordless microphones and more.

But which kind? Which brand? Rechargeable or not?

Sometimes called "general

purpose," **heavy-duty batteries** are really light duty. They're good for low-drain devices, such as wall clocks, and have one-third the capacity of alkaline batteries, which don't cost much more.

Alkaline batteries work well and are economical for most applications except high-drain devices, such as digital cameras and audio players.

Super alkaline batteries are designed for high-drain devices and last about 50 percent longer. **Lithium batteries**, also for high-drain devices, last much longer than alkalines but are more expensive.

Rechargeable batteries are more expensive up front but cheaper in the long run, even with the cost of a charger and electricity. They lose power while idle; however, you can recharge batteries 200 or more times. Choose nickel metal hydride (NiMH) over nickel cadmium (NiCad). The new hybrid NiMH cells come charged, lose power at a slower



rate, and maintain 85 percent of their charge even after sitting idle for a year. Rechargeable batteries must be recycled.

You can get a charger and four rechargeable batteries for \$30 to \$50. When compared with 50-cent disposables, you could save \$350 after 200 charges. If the rechargeables yield 500 charges, \$1 disposables end up being \$1,950 more expensive. Electricity cost for charging is negligible.

If you only buy one type of battery, choose all-purpose alkaline. Independent tests have shown that no brand seems to be consistently better, and generics are often the best value. Most alkaline batteries have a shelf life of five to seven years, so you can stock up. Buying larger quantities gets you a much better cost per battery.

Change out all your batteries on a regular schedule; Daylight Savings Time changes are a great reminder. And check with your local and state recycling or household hazardous waste coordinators for your area's battery disposal program.



Katie Snider
*Human Resources
Editor*

Working with an Aging Workforce

According to an AARP article, "Staying Ahead of the Curve 2004: Employer Best Practices for Mature Workers," in 2002, 14 percent of the workforce was 55 years or older. By 2012, nearly 20 percent of workers will be at least 55. This represents an increase of more than 10 million workers in this age group. These statistics represent only a portion of the baby boomer generation, who are now in their 40s, 50s, and 60s.

Many of the baby boomers, who are working now, will continue to work beyond normal retirement age. Increasingly individuals are staying in the workforce well into their 70s, 80s, and even 90s. Work keeps them physically and mentally active and provides them with something interesting to do.

Other baby boomers will continue to work because they are not financially secure and feel they need more money to be able to retire comfortably. Once employees reach full retirement age (age 66 in 2008), Social Security no longer

places a limit on their earnings. In addition, because of rising health care costs, many boomers work so that they can continue to receive the affordable health insurance benefits offered through their employer. Finally, due to advancements in medicine, health care technology, and wellness education, people are healthier and living longer and are able to continue to work. For most employers this represents the positive side of the aging workforce.

However, one problem facing employers with older workers is handling these workers' performance issues. When a long-term employee is suddenly not performing satisfactorily, it is easy to jump to the conclusion that the drop in performance is age-related. Employers must resist this assumption. Older workers are subject to the same everyday stresses and situations that may cause the performance of younger employees to suddenly deteriorate, such as family or financial problems.

If an older worker experiences difficulty satisfactorily performing the functions of the job, he or she should be treated as any other employee in the same situation according to the policy on performance discipline. Even if the employer suspects the performance issue is caused by an age-related problem, the employer should not ask the employee to see a physician or submit to a "fitness for duty" exam to determine the presence of an

age-related illness such as dementia.

An exception occurs if the employee's job performance poses a threat to the safety of the worker or his co-workers. Then, the individual should be removed from the job and provided with a copy of the job description to take to the employee's physician to determine whether the employee can safely perform the job.

Many times older workers realize they can no longer perform their job functions efficiently or safely, and may request to transfer into another position. Sometimes, if the individual is not disabled under federal or state law, the only answer is termination of employment because the employee can no longer do the job and no other jobs are available within the company.

Companies should consider developing a plan for retaining their older workers or rehiring the skilled workers who have retired and left the organization. This may require evaluation of your current jobs and benefits to make staying more attractive to those employees who are considering retirement. Older workers tend to be more flexible in that they want to continue working, but would like to work on a part-time basis. Flexible working hours would allow the opportunity to continue working but also provide an opportunity to golf, travel, and take care of family needs.

Source: Barbara A. Bluemel, PHR, HR Manager, HR Digest, MRA—The Management Association, Inc., December 2007

What's the top green initiative at your property?

We want to know; all contact info is on the back page! Include your full name, property name, and address.

The Dirt on Entrance Mats!

Over three-quarters of the dust, dirt, and contaminants in a building come through the door on people's feet, damaging carpets, floors, and adding to the cost of maintenance. It's been estimated that one square yard of carpet can accumulate a pound or more of dirt in just a week. In most buildings, the cost of maintaining the floors is the single largest cost of cleaning. Removing a single pound of dirt from a building can cost more than \$600! An effective matting program not only helps protect the occupants of a building but also protects your bottom line.

The key issue with mats is their performance life. A high-performance mat made with a permanent bi-level construction can have a performance life of many years. Mats without a rubber-reinforced permanent bi-level construction have a 90- to 180-day performance life. To function effectively, low performance mats need to be

replaced more frequently, increasing cost and causing disposal issues.

A key criteria in the LEED® program (a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings and a registered trademark of the US Green Building Council — see pg. 1 for more information on LEED accreditation) is the control of contaminants entering a building. LEED credits may be achieved by specifying and using the proper matting systems inside and outside of all entryways. It is also important to use proper matting between adjoining areas in a property.

Four Things An Entrance Mat Should Do:

1. Stop Soil and Water at the Door. Surprisingly, not all mats are designed to do this. Look for mats that provide a combination of scraping and wiping to stop the maximum amount of

contaminants.

2. Store Soil and Water for Removal. Look for mats that are designed for maximum storage of soil and water and their easy removal when the mat is cleaned.

3. Minimize Tracking of Soil and Water. Mats with a permanent rubber reinforced, bi-level construction provide an upper surface for walking and a lower area to store soil and water for later removal.

4. Provide a Safe Surface. Slip-resistant mats minimize movement on the floor under traffic. Look for mats with a "water dam" border that contains moisture below the traffic level to help prevent slip and fall incidents. Rubber-backed mats provide better slip resistance than low performance, vinyl-backed mats.

Source: The Andersen Company

2008 Calendar

Trade shows and conventions are a fantastic way to find out what's new and what's happening in the industry. Here are some events scheduled for the coming months.

Resort Hotel Association 2008 Annual Conference
July 11 - 14; Sedona AZ; www.resorthotelinsurance.com

94th Annual Convention Destination Marketing
July 28 - 30; Las Vegas, NV; www.destinationmarketing.org

2008 I-CHRIE Annual Conference
July 30 - Aug. 2; Atlanta, GA; www.chrie.org

Louisiana Foodservice EXPO
Aug. 2 - 4; New Orleans, LA; www.lra.org

CHART Hospitality Training Summer Conference
Aug. 9 - 12; Washington, D.C.; www.chart.org

Mid-Atlantic Beverage & Lodging Expo
Sept. 17 - 18; Baltimore, MD; www.midatlanticexpo.com

HFTP Annual Convention & Trade Show 2008
Sept. 24 - 27; Nashville, TN; www.hftp.org

AH&LA Fall Conference
Nov. 7 - 11; New York, NY; www.ahla.com/conventions

Hotel/Motel & Restaurant Show
Nov. 8 - 11; New York, NY; www.ihmrs.com

Quirky Quote

Perhaps travel cannot prevent bigotry, but by demonstrating that all peoples cry, laugh, eat, worry, and die, it can introduce the idea that if we try and understand each other, we may even become friends.

— Maya Angelou

read check-in online at www.americanhotel.com

✓ Check Out

Your feedback, suggestions, stories, and ideas are what make the pages of this newsletter interesting and useful to everyone in the hospitality field. Please take a moment to jot down your thoughts. Send your responses to:

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Please note: Submitted photos and information are not returnable. Submissions may be edited for space and clarity.

Check-In is published four times a year by American Hotel Register Company. We hope you've enjoyed this issue. If you need an extra copy, just ask!

Editor: Barbara Sirovatka



Jim Leahy

Letter from the President

Dear Friends,

Have you attended one wedding that was a "disaster" and another that was "fabulous?"

Chances are that both had problems and neither went exactly as planned. Both likely had problems with the schedule, the weather, the band, the photographer, the caterer, guests who didn't show up, and guests who drank too much.

The difference between "disaster" and "fabulous" was probably the attitude of the bride (and maybe her mother). If the bride saw it as a once-in-a-lifetime show and needed everything to be absolutely perfect, the imperfections could ruin her day and dampen its mood.

On the other hand, if the bride saw the wedding as a joyous celebration of life and family and friends, her smiles and happiness overcame any problems.

All of life is like that. When we look for perfection in ourselves and others, we're going to be disappointed. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't do our very best every single day. What is does mean is that doing our very best isn't enough without the "attitude."

There are things in life we just can't control. Life never fits itself to our expectations.

If you see yourself as a perfectionist who needs every activity to be ideal, then change your attitude. Unless you do, you'll go through life unhappy, taking blame for things that were not under your control, and feeling like a failure for not meeting your own impossible standards.

Rather than "perfection," aim for great results, happy results! Great results come from making others feel welcome, cared for, valued, forgiven, loved, and truly accepted for who they are.

In the end, people may not remember whether they were in a bowling alley or a grand hall. They may not remember decorations or music. They do remember how they felt when they got together.

Seek to encourage life, love, and celebration, not perfection. Don't set unreachable standards for yourself. We have so much to be grateful for!

Love,

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