



INDUSTRY UPDATE

OPINION ARTICLE

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Hotel Operations in the COVID Era

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Social distancing has become a norm in today's COVID-19 world and hotels need to re-evaluate and update their SOPs to adapt to this change.

HVS has prepared this document to help hoteliers in the planning process regarding the formulation of SOPs on how to operate their hotels once the lockdown has been lifted. We strongly recommend that hotels always follow the

guidelines provided by the Health Department and the state and central Government, including guidelines on maintaining records etc. based on local authority requirements, to formulate their SOPs.

The first step is to make a Guest Booklet or Communication methodology to be handed over to the Guests at their first touch point, so that they are very clear on what is expected of them for their own safety and also the mandatory requirements as per the health authorities.

Identify and set-up a Safety Team with a Leader, who will be responsible to ensure that all measures are being implemented and recorded. Ensure that you conduct a detailed workshop for Associates, maintaining Social Distancing. You should have a 'Crisis Management' documented plan in place and



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possible issues to the Safety Team.

We have divided this report into two parts which cover the Front & the Heart of the house under various groups.

Hotel Operations in the COVID Era – Front of the House

'Namaste' should be used as the greeting for all Guests at all touchpoints to maintain Social Distance.



Guest Transport

- Ensure the driver is wearing protective gear such as mask, gloves etc.
- The car should be disinfected with every arrival



- Guest instructions to be placed at the back seat; the information booklet must cover all the steps being taken by the hotel for safety and sanitization along with the operational norms for restaurants, room service, housekeeping & laundry procedures

Entrance

- Temperature checks at entrance should be mandatory
- Guests running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be politely asked to return or directed to the closest hospital/medical facility
- Disinfect and clean Guest luggage after informing the Guests
- Provide a mask if Guest is not wearing one, if required

Reception

- If the Guest is arriving from restricted countries or regions, ensure that you have detailed information from the Guest upfront before arrival or at time of making the reservation
- For all pre-booked Guests all check-in formalities should be completed online to reduce contact and time at the front desk
- Give safety, hygiene and other instructions to the Guests as per the new SOP
- Ensure markings on the floor at reception to maintain Social Distancing
- Ensure Associates are wearing masks & gloves
- Keep sanitizers for Guests to use
- Keep paper, envelopes and all equipment sanitized
- Keep swabs which Guests can use with sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards

Elevators

- Ensure that safety instructions, including the number of Guests allowed at one time, is placed inside the elevator and is easily visible; apologize for the delay and inconvenience caused to the Guests due to the new safety norms
- Elevator floor must have markings with directions, so that Guests do not face each other and maintain the appropriate Social Distance
- Ensure elevator floor buttons are regularly sanitized by the Housekeeping Associates
- Keep floor & other area of the elevators that can be touched sanitized
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers in the elevators

Guest Rooms



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between, based on occupancy levels

- Guests instructions given at the reception should include instructions on how the rooms are sanitized at regular intervals
- May need a tent card or post to say the room & other touch points have been sanitized
- Ensure Housekeeping Associates on the floor are wearing safety gear
- Keep sanitizers at regular intervals on the floor and small dispensers in the rooms
- Inform Guests that newspapers are not being delivered due to safety reasons, but e-papers will be made available through WhatsApp etc.
- Laundry, room service instructions should be available in the room for the new SOPs being implemented
- Room linen to be changed once in two days or ONLY on request; no turn down services to facilitate minimal contact

Restaurants

- Reduce number of tables to maintain Social Distancing norms
- Seating for the tables to be reduced to half of capacity
- Arrival instructions should explain to Guests that they should come down to the restaurants only when a table is available to avoid crowding
- You may wish to avoid buffets initially and include either TDH or 'a la carte'
- Staff must be trained for minimal contact/communication during service
- Ensure Associates are wearing masks & gloves
- Use disposable napkins which are pre-packed or individually packed serviettes
- Keep sanitizers for Guests to use
- Keep swabs which Guests can use with sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards

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Pool, Gym & Spa

- Keep these areas closed till advised to open, as per government norms
- Suggest alternate options / drop to open parks or walks which may be safer
- Include Yoga sessions or health channels in the morning for Guests to follow



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- Limit the number of Guests in the area based on maximum allowed
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the Guest has moved out

Meetings

- In case Guests require a meeting area, keep enough space between tables & chairs
- Limit the number of Guests in the area based on maximum allowed
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the Guest has moved out

Check-out

- Create a separate check-out area if you think it's getting over-crowded and wherever possible use e-check out by emailing the bill & accepting online payments
- Advise the Guests to inform their check-out plans in advance so that bills can be made ready
- Put floor markers as in case of check-in
- Provide sanitizers and other swabs in case the Guest requires

Other Guidelines

- All indoor areas such as entrance lobbies, corridors and staircases, escalators, elevators, security guard booths, office rooms, meeting rooms, cafeteria should be mopped with a disinfectant with 1% sodium hypochlorite or phenolic disinfectants
- For metallic surfaces like door handles, security locks, keys etc. 70% alcohol can be used to wipe down surfaces where the use of bleach is not suitable
- Kindly refer to the WHO guidelines or your local state & central government health authorities for additional information on appropriate disinfectants

Based on the projected Occupancy levels you may wish to define the operational timings of each of the areas and advise your Guests accordingly.

Hotel Operations in the COVID Era – Heart of the House

Employee Transport

- Temperature check point for Associates before boarding the bus, where transport is provided
- Ensure that Associates transport is organised in case public transport is not operating in your cities or is not safe
- You may wish to have few Associates stay in the hotel, keeping in mind the Occupancy levels



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well

- Alternate methods to be devised for Associates to clock-in and clock-out at the hotel; could use QR code method
- Temperature check for all employee on clocking into the premises of the hotel
- Staff running temperature more than 98.6° F should be asked to return home

Employee Uniform

- Uniform exchange daily should be the norm
- Uniforms will need to be sanitized properly; steam press or heat iron can be used
- Associates will be given masks and gloves as part of the uniform across all departments
- Ensure that Associates are maintaining Social Distancing during uniform exchange

Employee Lockers

- The shifts will have to be staggered in various 15 minutes slot to ensure there is no overcrowding in the lockers and the number of employees are regulated with proper Social Distancing norms being followed
- Extensive hand wash and sanitizing arrangements must be made with signages explaining the need
- Regular monitoring to ensure there is no crowding on arrival or at the locker room

Employee Tools

- Proper tools and gears for Associates which would include masks, gloves and also tools in various departments which shall minimize human touch
- Use disposable masks only
- Associates to wear disinfected & clean gloves
- Associates to isolate themselves in case they have any symptoms of cold or flu

Employee Dining

- Shifts must be staggered to avoid cafeteria crowding
- Cafeteria hours should be extended to allow smaller groups over a longer period of time - the usage should be restricted to 33% of its capacity at any given time

Kitchen



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reduce interactions between teams

- All staff should wear disposable masks, gloves, hair nets and all other safety gear
- Workstations should be placed in such a way that the staff is not facing each other and can maintain appropriate Social Distance
- Run limited menus and ramp-up in a phased manner
- You may tweak the menus to include more options of cooked food rather than raw food
- Ensure proper cleaning of vegetables, meats and all other materials that are required in the kitchens; use approved sanitizing agents to disinfect
- Ensure all tools get sanitized after each use
- It would be useful to use an Autoclave machine for all cooking equipment, ladles etc.

Receiving Tools

- Proper cleaning procedures for items being received
- Quarantine & date tag receivable goods before you take them inside the stores
- All supplies need to be fully sanitized before entering the stores and refrigerators
- Use WHO and Health Department approved sanitizing agents for the same
- Ensure area is sanitized at regular intervals
- Vendors should be advised on how you will accept goods and how their staff should arrive with necessary protective gear

Service Elevators

- Ensure that safety instructions, including the number of employees allowed at one time, is placed inside the elevator and is easily visible
- Ensure elevator floor buttons are regularly sanitized
- Keep floor & other area of the elevators that can be touched sanitized
- Elevator floor must have markings with directions, so that employees do not face each other and maintain Social Distancing
- Keep one elevator dedicated to quarantine and evacuate any possible suspected cases for both Guests and Associates
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers in the elevators

Employee Clinic

- Ensure regular health check-ups for employees; can have a well-equipped clinic operational within the hotel premises with a health partner



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suspected case

- Check all employee temperatures twice a day

Employee Training

- L&D should conduct sensitization classes for Associates on upgraded hygiene standards; they can also have visiting faculty to update Associates on standards
- Employees must be well-informed about all COVID related operating SOPs

Sales Associate

- Sales & Marketing Associates who visit various offices can be asked to go home post appointments and submit reports from home
- If they are visiting clients, ensure that they are aware of the necessary safety precautions they should be taking during their meetings

All teams should be regularly updated with the latest guidelines by WHO and your local & central government authorities.

Sources: Indian Ministry of Health & Family Welfare & WHO

SOURCE

[View source](#)

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Dipti Mohan, Senior Manager - Research with HVS South Asia, is a seasoned knowledge professional with extensive experience in research-based content creation. She has authored several 'point of view' documents such as thought leadership reports, expert opinion articles, white papers and research reports.

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