



SAFE AND SECURE

The pandemic has changed safety and hygiene norms across hospitality even as international protocols are becoming the norm.

BY BINDU GOPAL RAO

→ Housekeeping staff are now highly demanded to ensure safety and hygiene, with a primary focus on high touch point areas.

While cleanliness and hygiene have always been important for the hospitality industry, the global COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the customer focus monumentally to these protocols. The industry has seen a permanent change in operating standards, and hotels globally have incorporated enhanced safety and hygiene procedures to curtail the spread of the virus.

ON GUARD

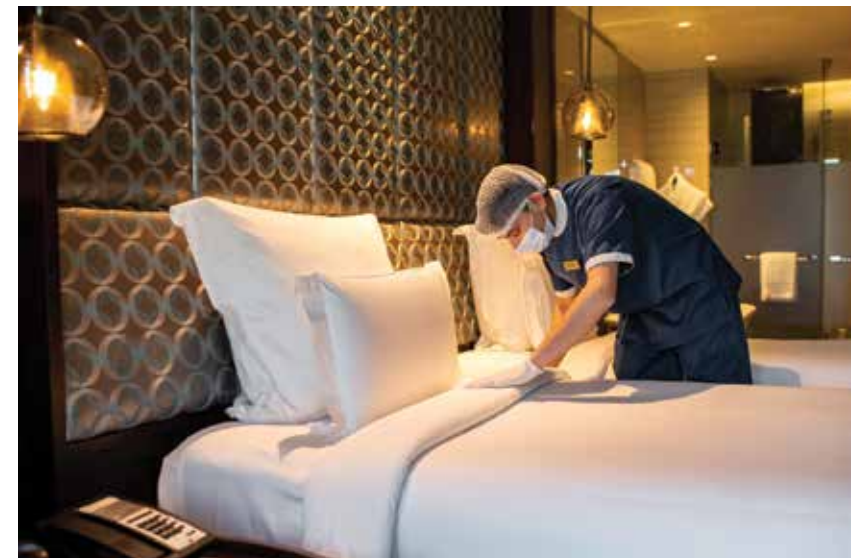
With safety and hygiene being the top priority, housekeeping teams have the most significant focus areas and touch points to manage through rigorous training, informed product usage, and agile operations. Housekeeping, engineering, front office, transportation, security, food, and beverage – culinary and service and event operations are the critical operating departments where the maximum shift in operations has occurred. “We use Diversey products to safeguard the safety and hygiene of the hotel, staff, and guests. These cleaning and sanitising solutions are WHO-approved. We have always been cognizant of the need to be aware of devel-



→ Payal Joshi, Executive Housekeeper, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park

oping needs, be it guests’ requirements or team member safety, and quickly adapt these into our standard operating procedures through clear internal communications and on-the-job training. Also, we have a robust signage program that acts as a clear reminder for guests and team members to be mindful and adhere to these protocols,” says Payal Joshi, Executive Housekeeper, Hilton and Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park.

As an ISO 22000:2018 certified management, Conrad Bengaluru is focused on continually improving every departmental process in line with the food safety management system. “The continuous training of



→ Pullman Aerocity have designed cleaning schedules in a way that it enhances efficiency and maintains the highest hygiene standards.



→ Vidyashree C.V., Hygiene Manager, Conrad Bengaluru



→ Vinay Gupta, Director of Operations, ibis & ibis styles India



→ Rajiv Kapoor, GM, Fairmont Jaipur



→ Shruti Shibulal, CEO & Director, Tamara Leisure Experiences

our team members to ensure high-level expertise about food safety and hygiene is of the utmost importance. We are happy to share that we have completed the booster vaccination campaign for all eligible team members ensuring all members are confident and comfortable delivering the Conrad experience. For our guests, we have implemented the Hilton Clean Stay program featuring contactless menus, service designs, payment gateways and cleaning protocols,” says Vidyashree C.V., Hygiene Manager, Conrad Bengaluru.

THE SPECIFICS

The ALLSAFE global cleanliness and prevention standards developed with and vetted by Bureau Veritas, a world leader in testing, inspections, and certification, are part of all Accor group of hotels. All the ibis hotels must apply these standards and will be audited either by Accor operational experts or third-party auditors such as Bureau Veritas to receive this label. Vinay Gupta, Director of Operations, ibis & ibis styles India, says, “We have put in place strict measures adhering to both governmental requirements and Accor’s ALL SAFE sanitary guidelines. As such, using the Aarogya Setu app and thermal screening is mandatory at the security check at the hotel entrance. Guests are also requested always to wear a mask when inside the hotel. Enforcing social distancing in public areas with stickers placement denoting the same, promoting Contactless check-in, check-out, and payments whenever possible, and all the key public areas providing sanitiser (front desk, elevators, restaurants) are some practices. Our employees are trained in comprehensive safety and hygiene practices. A reinforced cleaning program in public areas with frequent disinfection of all high-touch areas. We have strengthened room cleaning protocols including extra disinfection of high-touch room and bathroom areas and follow new food safety standards and protocols.”

FOOD SAFETY

Intensified food safety and hygiene measures have been introduced

to ensure the safety of guests, associates, and visitors. For this reason, several hotels have developed the safe food and hygiene standards. "Fairmont Hotels wholly accepts its legal and moral duty to comply with the CODEX principles of HACCP, international good hygiene practices and local countries' food safety laws. It recognises that all food delivery, food preparation, storage and service areas must be maintained to a high standard of cleanliness and food handling to ensure it does not become contaminated during any part of the food process. It further recognises the need for effective control procedures of all types of microbial, physical, chemical and allergen hazards. All controlled procedures implemented will either eliminate the hazard completely or reduce it to an acceptable level," says Rajiv Kapoor, GM, Fairmont Jaipur. The company's emphasis is on management control of food safety. This manual has been developed from food safety risk assessment (HACCP) to provide a framework for the hotel's food operations. It is expected that all suppliers will have a similar philosophy.



📍 Vrinda Kumar, Assistant Hygiene Manager, Fairmont Jaipur



📍 Rakesh Sethi, GM, Shangri-La Bengaluru

HOLISTIC HEALTH

The pandemic has brought forth the need to ensure health is a priority. This not just includes physical health but also mental wellness. This is also why many hotels ensure that their staff can connect with counsellors to share any mental concerns they may have. Dr Malini Saba, Founder & Chairman of Serendipity Hotel, says, "For ongoing improvement, our property will often audit and monitor compliance with critical procedures, preferably utilising a scalable system that permits comparative reporting of guest happiness, quality, and safety performance, to achieve continuous improvement. In addition, we ensure all employees are well-informed about all the health-protecting risk assessments and corrective

procedures and provide them with updated operating procedures and wall charts; online training classes; hand hygiene guidelines and solutions; the appropriate personal protective equipment; and easy access to non-food spill kits to assist them with their daily duties."

HOUSEKEEPING STANDARDS

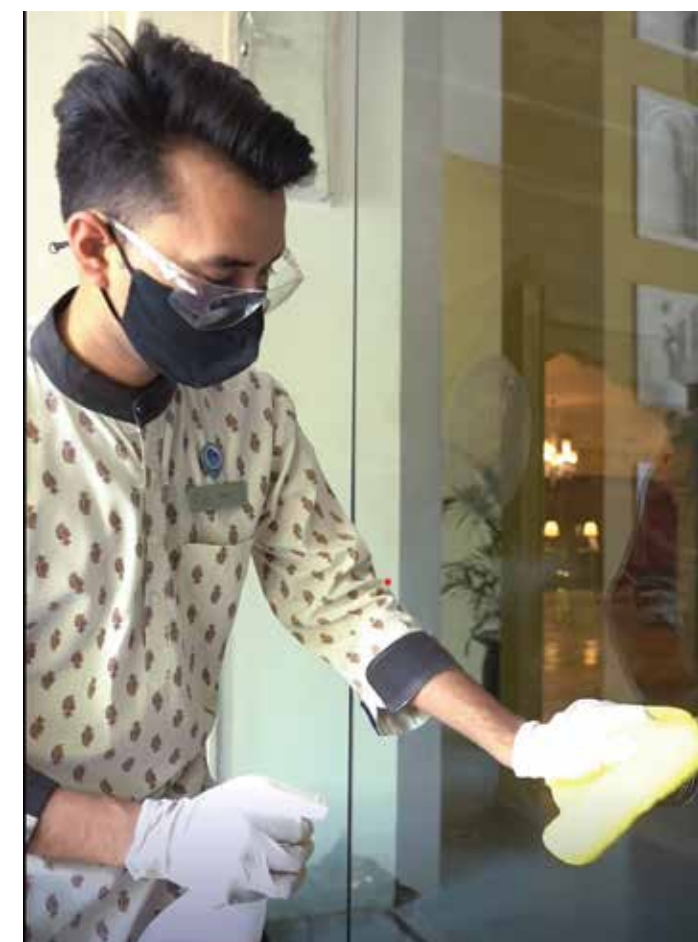
Housekeeping colleagues are now highly demanded to ensure safety and hygiene are maintained throughout every nook and space of the hotel with a primary focus on high touch point guest areas where the same is cleaned every hour. Rakesh Sethi, GM, Shangri-La Bengaluru, says, "Shangri-La Group has introduced the 'Shangri-La Cares' commitment which elevates its already rigorous hygiene and safety protocols for all properties worldwide. We use Diversey recommended disinfection chemicals Oxivir Five 16 for linen, carpets, curtains and sofas while Virex II256 for marble floors. We use Soft Care Des E spray hand sanitiser across the hotel and a ULV machine to sanitise the area post-



📍 Hilton Garden Inn Bengaluru Embassy Manyata Business Park specifically use only WHO-approved cleaning and sanitising solutions.



📍 Shangri-La Group has introduced the 'Shangri-La Cares', a program which elevates its already rigorous hygiene and safety protocols for all properties worldwide.



📍 Fairmont Jaipur follows controlled procedures for eliminating all types of microbial, physical, chemical and allergen hazards.



📍 Sharad K Upadhyay, General Manager, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida



📍 Ketan Kerkar, Executive House Keeper at Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach

cleaning. In case of positive cases, we use the entire Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for high safety assurance and, in the normal situation, Light PPE (mask, gloves and hairnet) while servicing the rooms." Through the pandemic and continuing today, their profile has been further elevated to ensure stringent checks are carried out to ensure maximum hygiene levels are maintained.

SAFETY PROTOCOLS

With IHG Way of Clean, which was launched in 2015, the group ensures deep cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectants in their guest rooms and all public spaces. "We have been working with Ecolab and Diversey to provide higher impact and more efficient cleanliness solutions to keep our guests and teammates safe. Furthermore, regular training on enhanced protocols and best practices evolves the IHG Way of Clean into a robust. We have a detailed Covid prevention SOP, which is prepared with new tools and resources for our guests, staff, visitors, vendors, and all stakeholders. Along with the above, mandatory mask-wearing, social distancing, etc., are regularly monitored, and we ensure strict compliance with them," says Sharad K Upadhyay, GM, Crowne Plaza Greater Noida. With the onset of COVID-19, the continuous evolution of cleaning protocols and the usage of medical-grade chemicals and tools have been incorporated and are very much a part of new standards. And when it comes to housekeeping, it has never been under more scrutiny than in these last two years.

GUEST CO-OPERATION

Upon entering the hotel, all guests must complete health check forms, present vaccination certificates, pass a temperature check, and wear a mask. Travel in 2022 is different from what it was a couple of years ago. As restrictions ease and borders open, it is important to understand guest behaviour and appropriately communicate with them. While travellers are ready to visit new locations and destinations,



➔ For ongoing improvement, Serendipity Hotels will often audits and monitors compliance with critical procedures, preferably utilising a scalable system that permits comparative reporting.

they are now more focused on cleanliness than ever before. "We encourage our guests to maintain social distance, wear masks and expect their co-operation for their well-being and safety. As the hospitality sector has reopened for business, we are doing all we can to provide not only a clean space for our guests, but also one that alleviates their health-related worries. Local authorities will continue to require businesses to adhere to certain guidelines. Still, it's incumbent on the organisations to implement those rules in a way that both fits their business and takes away as little as possible from the guest experience," says Ketan Kerkar, Executive Housekeeper, Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach. At Novotel Mumbai Juhu Beach, they use Green Seal Certified products in housekeeping and laundry. These products are environment-friendly and effective for all cleaning protocols, especially those related to Covid-19. All Laundry linen is washed at a high temperature, giving us 100% assurance that the linen is disinfected. All linen goes through a quality check before being placed in guests' rooms or public areas.

ENHANCED MEASURES

Further enhanced measures for safety and hygiene include

strengthened room cleaning protocols that are being followed for room and bathroom areas. Pullman Aerocity has organised a separate training programme with chemical specialists on disinfection processes and their implementation. Vineet Mishra, Cluster GM, Pullman Aerocity, says, "To build more confidence for our guests, we have a dedicated guest hotline to answer any questions they may have to ensure a safe and hygienic stay for all. We have also reinforced a cleaning program in public areas, enforced social distancing in all common areas, and conducted contactless check-in and check-out. While planning for safety and hygiene, we al-



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ways consider the traffic, soil condition, material used on flooring, wall finishes, upholstery and timelines. Cleaning schedules have been designed to enhance efficiency and maintain the highest hygiene standards. For effective cleanliness, most of our cleaning in and around public areas takes place at night after the restaurant is closed. While periodic cleaning enhances the upkeep, spot cleaning takes place during the day, with cleaning schedules being checked and tweaked based on requirements. We also consider using third-party vendors' help when needed to maintain a safe and hygienic environment across all areas of the hotel." Staying safe and maintaining hygiene is something that will be a norm and will also be a guest's responsibility as much as that of the hotel. ■



➔ Vineet Mishra, Cluster GM, Pullman Aerocity