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Getting the hotel hygiene in order before reopening

FHRAI's webinar on 'Housekeeping Redefined – COVID-19 Era Safety Procedures,' focused on housekeeping & safety procedures to be followed in order to restart operations.



Kanchan Nath



Dr V. Pasupathy

Over 1,000 + members actively participated in the webinar, while registrations had been made by 4,000+ members. Priority was given on the first-come first-serve basis. The online recordings were later viewed by 10,000+ people. Yet again the session was made interactive with questions posed through the Q&A section at the bottom of the page and most of the same were covered through the discussion.

The webinar was moderated by **Nirav Gandhi**, EC member, FHRAI. Panellists included **Sareena Kochar**, Vice President – Housekeeping, Lemon Tree Hotels; **Abha Dwivedi**, Corporate Housekeeper,

Fortune Park Hotels; **Debashis Chatterjee**, Corporate Executive – Housekeeper, Sarovar Hotels; **Namrata Marwah**, Corporate Housekeeper, The Leela Group; **Dr V. Pasupathy**, National Advisor FHRAI, Lead Expert National Resource Person – FSSAI; and **Dilpreet Singh Bindra**, Area Director Operations – North India, Bhutan, Nepal, Marriott International. The facilitator was **Pradeep Shetty**, Joint Honorary Secretary, FHRAI. The vote of thanks was given by **Gurbaxish Singh Kohli**, VP, FHRAI. The administrator of the webinar was **Himanshu Talwar**, Assistant Secretary General, FHRAI.

Broadly, the following points were discussed – FSSAI & BIS Directives for Hotels; COVID Officer – Checklists & Compliances; Guest Services – Front Office Operations; Servicing Rooms Pre-check-in & Post check-out; Common Areas – Guest Services Policy; BOH – Back of the House Policy; and Laundry & Staff Uniform Policy. Elaborating on the key five principles recommended by



Dr V. Pasupathy: Key principles include hand washing, social distancing, personal & respiratory hygiene & sanitation



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the government for front office, housekeeping and hotel operations, Dr V. Pasupathy stated that these principles include hand washing, social distancing, critical personal hygiene care, respiratory hygiene and cleaning and sanitation. He also stated that it is a nine-step formula. He said, "Since it's a new normal for the industry, you need to have a plan. You need to appoint a special COVID-19 Response Officer. He/she needs to be a senior person as he/she will be the nodal officer to work with the government. Also, create small special facilities, train personnel on special facilities created, then implement and monitor it scientifically, maintain records and reports as contact tracing becomes very important in an emergency and finally modify as per the local authority suggests as new information about this virus is emerging from time to time."

He further said that other directives include that nobody with fever or flu like symptoms is to be allowed to enter the hotel whether he is a visitor, guest, vendor, supplier or an employee. In case any employee develops fever at work, he is not to be sent back home but isolated, treated and based on advice of a doctor, reported to local authorities. There need to be posters everywhere, also in the back of the house, motivating staff to disclose all information on contact with any COVID patients. If anyone refuses to use COVID-19 response uniform, he/



Dilpreet Singh Bindra: These are about 140 to 170 touchpoints depending on the size of a hotel



she will not be allowed to work. You must also have an isolation facility for emergency, with some ventilation. Some suggestions include – AC room temperature should be between 24 and 30 degrees and relative humidity of 40 to 70 per cent should be maintained. All housekeepers should be careful that they use 70 per cent alcohol for sanitation, disinfect with one per cent Sodium Hypochloride or an equivalent solution – 800 ml of chlorine in 10 litres of water. Also, one person should be responsible for linen handling.



Dilpreet Singh Bindra

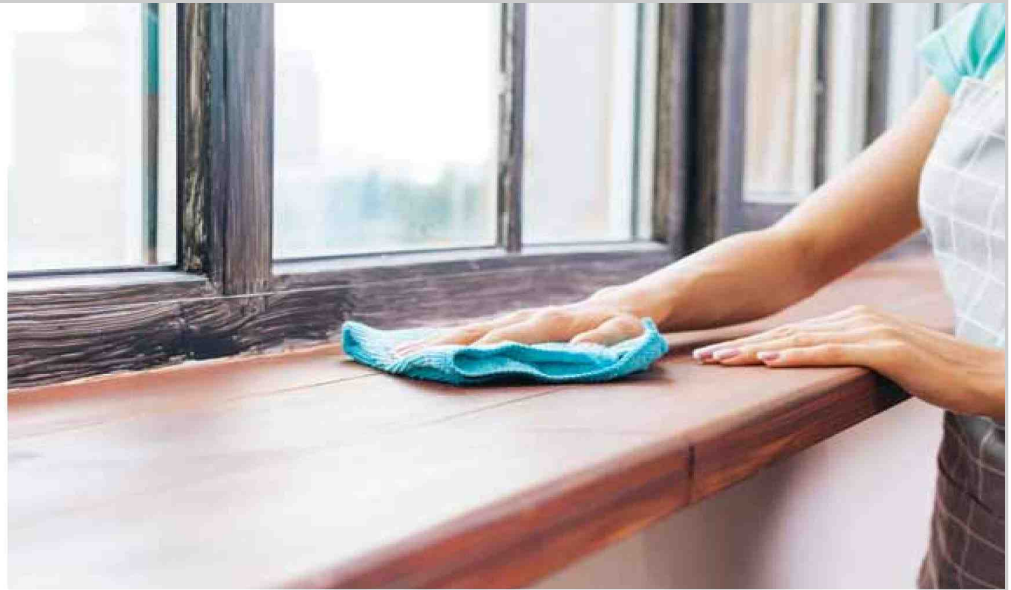
IDENTIFYING TOUCHPOINTS

On the airport pick-up facility, Pasupathy said, "A vehicle needs to be sanitised with 70 per cent alcohol using a non-absorbent cloth on seats, door handles as well as touchpoints. The driver must wear gloves and luggage should be sanitised. Have sanitisers in the car and do not let guests enter the hotel without washing their hands and face." Dilpreet Singh Bindra added, "What we have done in our hotels is, actually mapped the journey from the airport to the car, porch, arrival, front desk, elevator,

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Nirav Gandhi



He added that with BonVoy, Marriott is looking at a lot of digitisation. With the Bonvoy App you can chat with the hotel, you don't really need a person. They are looking at digitisation of registration cards, using ipads, digitisation of in-room menus, online pre check-in. So, there are number of things that they are looking at in terms of technology. "When a guest enters the hotel we are trying to minimise the contact and elevate the experience through the digital front with the BonVoy App", he said.

LUGGAGE WOES

On the rooms, Bindra added, "Luggage is very important, we are working with our hygiene partners to understand what to use and all our hotels across the world are coming up with the latest technology to remain at the forefront in cleanliness. We need to declutter the room, there is a 'have to' and a 'need to' list, the 'need to' list items should be placed as per request."

To clean guest bags without ruining them, Marriott is looking at electrostatic spraying, it's a cleaning method, other things are also being looked at. There will be a paradigm shift, wherein people will carry less luggage and also try and carry their luggage themselves. Dr Pasupathy further said that the guest should not be allowed to lean in on the front office desk, there needs to be a 3 metre barricade in place. A guest must only be offered a sanitised tray with documentation. Leather and wood trays should be avoided, sanitised acrylic or plastic trays should be given which can be easily sanitised.

NEW LEARNINGS

Namrata Marwah went on to say, "We need to unlearn what we have learnt, and we need to start afresh, anew. We should start thinking out-of-the-box. What I understand is that PPE is mandatory. The focus is on hygiene and sanitation. Hygiene was always there, now we need to sanitise everything, even the back of

Namrata Marwah: Personal hygiene, education and training of people is very important, fear should not set in



Debashis Chatterjee

guest room, F&B, public area, and to the check-out. We map this journey and identify the touchpoints, which the guest is actually touching during this time. These are about 140 to 170 touchpoints depending on the size of a hotel. The maximum touchpoints are in a guest room and they are above 70.

Then we look at all the five points suggested by Dr. Pasupathy. Surface areas, guest contact and food safety, these are the main areas to look at. We are relooking at SOPs. We are looking at a contactless stay for the guest right from reservations. Technology is key and can be used to maximise your front office experience, making the whole experience contactless."

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Sareena Kochar

the house. Only then can you say that any guest or even an employee can get into the hotel. So personal hygiene, education and training of the people is very important. Technology is good, but the human factor remains important. Fear should not set in and people should feel that they are working in a safe environment. Washing hands is very important, wearing masks, gloves is essential. Disposal of garbage is vital."

TRAINING IS KEY

Immediately after the lockdown opens many hotels would be looking at sustainable and inexpensive measures to restart operations. Abha Dwivedi added, "Training is key. Front office is being trained to take pre-arrival information and share their ids through photographs. Social distancing is being maintained. We will be having minimum number of associates in the front office counter and no queues. Also, we will receive one guest at a time, while others wait. We are not expecting too many people initially and we hope that time will yet again be a learning curve for us. We are also devising processes for larger check-ins. MICE will pick up, eventually banqueting will also look up. We should use this time for training and learnings. We need to redo our SOPs and LSOPs. We are looking at smartening up our procedures so that when guests come they have the confidence by way of how we do things. It's a digital media age, we need to give all the information the guests require to satisfy them that we have made the place safe for them to stay. We need to treat our associates with care. It should be part of the acculturation to even the humblest of associates to maintain hygiene and senior managers will have to walk the talk. We are working with Diversey for more information on disinfecting currency with a chemical. Right now for current practices, we are requesting clients to make online payments"

GLOVES, MASKS AND HAND TOWELS

Dr Pasupathy said gloves, face masks and hand towels

Debashis Chatterjee: Keep currency in a quarantine currency drawer and handle it with gloves

will be part of our lives. He added that wearing gloves for front office is essential and everyone needs to be provided with a personal hand towel. Five to six pairs of face masks which are washable need to be given. Also, to disinfect currency, it needs to be received with gloves and quarantined for 24 hours. He added that it is essential to have hand washing stations at staff, supply, and guest entry. He also suggested that mobile stations can be used for the same so as to not spoil the decor of the premises. A simple soap hand wash for 20 seconds is better than a hand sanitiser.

CLEAN CARPETS

Debashis Chatterjee added, "Hand sanitiser has to be provided at every nook and corner of the hotel – porch, lobby, reception, etc. It makes sense to keep currency in a quarantine currency drawer, lock the drawer and take currency out the next day to be handled with gloves." On public areas, he added, "As far as high traffic areas are concerned, for front of the house, entry-based elevators, there will be dedicated people to sanitise them every hour. Handrails, remotes, all other touch points will be sanitised. Some bathrooms next to banquets may remain closed. Continuous training and retraining of staff is important. Wall-to-wall carpets cannot be removed immediately but area rugs need to be removed. On each and every table, sanitiser needs to be provided to the guests." On the common areas in the hotel, Sareena Kochar said, "In the lobby it would be best to place single seater sofas at a distance of six feet from one another." Dr Pasupathy added, "The virus is very unstable in a strong fabric and synthetics, it's stable in cotton. Carpets can be cleaned with shampoo."



Gurbaxish Singh Kohli



Himanshu Talwar