

MIPP *matters*



Ergonomics, Health & Safety for Hospitality Employees

Square Footage isn't for Squares, especially if You're a Hotel Operator



With summer in full swing and many making plans to travel to California to take in the best natural and historical sites this side west of the Mississippi, the hotel industry will reach peak capacity as families, backpackers, couples and all wanderlust travelers book up their travel plans in the coming months.

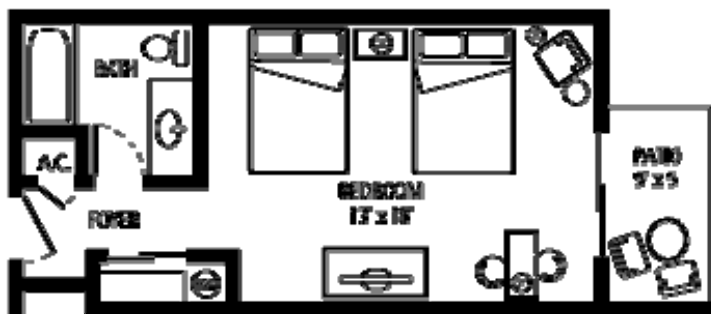
For the hotel industry, business isn't just good - it's great. But with occupancy rates climbing higher each year, the hotel industry struggles to maintain the staffing it needs to ensure smooth operations and to meet growing demand for rooms and beds. But with these increased demands, hotel operators and owners must heed Cal/OSHA's recent regulations requiring them to address the types of repetitive motions and stress-related injuries commonly sustained by housekeepers. The new law requires employers to implement a written policy and undertake a site-specific, initial worksite evaluation to identify and address the types of musculoskeletal injuries housekeepers may sustain in their jobs.

On top of these regulations, several cities within California, including Oakland and Long Beach, have proposed measures taking these requirements one step further. For instance, Oakland's initiative, titled "Measure Z," creates a number of key restrictions on the amount of work a housekeeping employee can perform, including restrictions on the number of hours, square footage they can clean in a day which itself can vary based on the number of rooms they clean in a shift. For the text of Measure Z, click on the link below:

https://www.acvote.org/acvote-assets/02_election_information/PDFs/20181106/en/Measures/22%20-%20Measure%20Z%20-%20City%20of%20Oakland.pdf.

Where does one start to ensure compliance with these requirements? With little guidance from the bodies that enacted the ordinance, ensuring compliance can be a confusing undertaking even for the most experienced hotel operators.

Keeping this in mind, on the next page we have included a few tips to start thinking about your operations and how they fit within the larger scheme of the new ordinances.



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Get a handle of the square footage you're working with

Review the drawings of your facility. Create a plan for how you can divide up to the 4,000 square feet requirement. Call each divided spot a "Zone" and assign employees their designated zone. If one zone is undersold or has less turnover in a day, have that employee assist another employee in a zone that is overbooked. Although this may be a bit of a chess game, it is a good start to see how to work the board to ensure your employees are working within requirements.

Evaluate the tasks performed by housekeeping employees

It's important to evaluate and understand what types of tasks each housekeeping employee accomplishes on a daily basis. Oftentimes housekeeping employees are engaged in a variety of different tasks when they turn over a room. Some housekeepers are also tasked with cleaning some general areas like the bathrooms, the lobby, or conference rooms. But if an employee performs just one or two tasks throughout the day, the risk of a musculoskeletal injury is much higher because of the repetition in performing the same tasks and reduced range of motion required of them. Consider breaking up the employee's tasks so that they are not focused on long-term, repetitive motions.

Do you have the right number of staff?

The number of housekeeping staff is critical. As a rule of thumb, if housekeeping employees need to clean more than 4,000 square feet on a routine basis, you probably don't have enough staff. Of course there are challenges with people calling in sick, the number of rooms that need to be turned over and other elements that may make it infeasible to ensure employees are cleaning less than 4,000 square feet every day. Having on-call employees or part-time employees fill in may be a helpful option.

Consider these tips as you contemplate your staffing needs for the summer. Of course, these tips are not intended to be legal advice, and you should consult with an attorney experienced in Cal/OSHA law.

**To find out more about Worksite Evaluations and Risk Assessments,
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707.894.4544 - 1.866.950.3746 - info@AccurateErgonomics.com