

## What you need to know: Hotel cleanliness and hygiene programs

May 15, 2020

In an effort to reassure both employees and travelers that they are doing what they can to protect them against COVID-19, hotels are implementing new and improved cleanliness and hygiene processes.

This report summarizes what hotel companies around the world are doing and planning.

While each chain may be taking its own approach to cleanliness and hygiene, organizations like the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), with its Safe Stay Advisory Council, may help to establish common standards across the industry.<sup>1</sup>

### Certification programs and industry guidelines

#### American Hotel & Lodging Association

AHLA wants to set health and safety best practices and protocols, which hotels should meet or exceed. So far 17 hotel companies have joined the AHLA Council: Accor, Aimbridge Hospitality, Best Western, Choice Hotels, G6 Hospitality, Hilton, Hyatt, IHG, Loews Hotels, Marriott, My Place Hotels, Noble Investment Group, Omni Hotels & Resorts, Red Lion Hotels, Red Roof and Wyndham.

AHLA has now issued new industrywide health and safety protocols. Safe Stay sets minimum standards for hotels to follow, developed by the advisory council and public health experts, supported by recommendations from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). AHLA will revise these standards as public health recommendations and federal, state and local laws change. While applying to U.S. hotels, Safe Stay may set a benchmark for hotels in other countries.

Safe Stay guidelines include:

- Hand sanitizers in key guest and staff entrances
- Signs reminding of CDC recommendations for wearing, handling and disposal of masks
- Reporting COVID-19 cases
- Staff protocols for hand-cleaning, safety and use of personal protective equipment
- Use of disinfectants
- Frequent cleaning of public and communal spaces
- Enhanced guestroom, linen, towels and laundry cleaning
- No-contact room service, limited buffet service, screened food displays, pre-packaged food
- Social distancing reminders and rearranged furniture in public spaces
- Use technology to reduce direct contact with guests
- Encourage contactless payment
- Limit van and shuttle services

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<sup>1</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 27, 2020

### StaySafe Hospitality certification

StaySafe describes itself as the international safety and security risk assurance and certification program, recognized by leading hotel groups and travel companies.<sup>2</sup> In response to COVID-19, StaySafe has developed a number of Infection Prevention & Control IPC (COVID-19) guidance notes, online assessment tools and a certification, which it believes can demonstrate a hotel is safe to welcome guests.

A bespoke online self-assessment enables hotels to benchmark against international best practices in IPC in the hospitality sector. StaySafe also offers a specific IPC assessment and certification for hotels looking for external reassurance that adequate IPC measures are in place.

### Major global chains

#### Accor launches cleaning certification

Accor has partnered with inspection and certification specialist Bureau Veritas to launch a certification scheme to reassure customers and employees that appropriate standards and cleaning protocols are in place as COVID-19 restrictions are eased.<sup>3</sup> Accor has involved doctors, epidemiologists, hotel owners and trade associations in the project. The French ministries of tourism, health and labor will validate details of the scheme.

The standards will apply to all Accor properties and will be outlined in an operational guide enabling hotels to rigorously apply the health and safety recommendations of authorities.

#### Best Western launches We Care Clean

Best Western initially responded to COVID-19 with upgraded cleaning and a move to hands-free check-in using its mobile concierge and texting. It also removed room amenities – decorative pillows, laundry bags, amenity trays, pens and notepads. At breakfast there are more pre-packaged options and fewer bulk dispensers.

On April 30, the company announced a more stringent program based on guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency, and Health Canada.<sup>4</sup>

We Care Clean expands upon the I Care Clean program Best Western launched in 2012. New protocols include upgraded sanitization measures, including staff waiting 24-72 hours to enter guestrooms after checkout-out; minimizing guest and employee contact through streamlined check-in/out; social distancing measures; wellness best practices; and removal of all brochures, magazines and papers. Sanitizing stations or wipes will be available throughout hotels. Unnecessary items will continue to be removed from guestrooms. Breakfast offerings have now been enhanced with “Grab & Go” and pre-plated food and beverage options. Public amenities – fitness centers, swimming pools and meeting rooms – will be more intensively cleaned and monitored.

Best Western will update the program regularly, based on the latest standards and recommendations by government agencies and industry groups.

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<sup>2</sup> [StaySafe Hospitality](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Travel Weekly](#), April 17, 2020

<sup>4</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 30, 2020

### Choice Hotels improves cleaning

Choice Hotels has made guest health and safety a priority at its independently-owned and operated franchised hotels. To this end, it has:<sup>5</sup>

- Shared enhanced cleaning, sanitation and disinfecting protocols with hotel owners. Training is available from cleaning supplies vendors
- Changed its food and beverage service, increasing pre-packaged offerings
- Activated response teams offering round-the-clock guidance and support to hotels
- Committed to providing hotels with the latest information and training from supplies and health authorities
- Advised guests that services and amenities on offer may change in accordance with local conditions

### Hilton working on CleanStay program

Hilton is collaborating with Reckitt Benckiser, maker of Lysol and Dettol cleaning products, on a new hotel sanitization program for its global portfolio.<sup>6</sup> The Hilton CleanStay with Lysol Protection program also includes advice from the Mayo Clinic's Infection Prevention and Control team. Hilton will launch new cleaning and disinfection protocols in June.

The CleanStay program may include hotel brand standards for a Hilton CleanStay room seal, extra disinfection for 10 high-touch areas (light switches, door handles, TV remotes), removing stationery, digitalizing guest directories, extra cleaning and social distancing in gym facilities, increased cleaning of public areas, disinfectant wipes in high-traffic areas, contactless check-in (at participating hotels) and new disinfection technologies, such as electrostatic sprays and ultraviolet light.

### Hyatt introducing GBAC STAR accreditation globally

Hyatt has made a new sanitization and safety promise to enhance employee and guest "safety and peace of mind."<sup>7</sup> Under its new program – Global Care & Cleanliness Commitment – Hyatt is from May introducing the Global Bio-risk Advisory Council (GBAC) STAR accreditation process for its more than 900 hotels around the world.

GBAC is a division of ISSA, the global cleaning industry association. GBAC STAR is a cleaning, disinfection and infectious disease prevention program.

By September, Hyatt will have at least one person at each hotel trained as a hygiene manager. They will ensure the hotel sticks to new operational guidance and protocols currently under development. These may include staff certification and training, more frequent cleaning with hospital-grade disinfectant, enhanced food safety, hand sanitizer stations, enhanced air quality, personal protective equipment for employees, and social distancing guidance in public areas.

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<sup>5</sup> [Choice Hotels](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 27, 2020

<sup>7</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 29, 2020

### IHG looking after health, safety and well-being

IHG remains in contact with global organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and relevant authorities, for country-specific needs, to ensure its COVID-19 response is relevant.

As well as meeting local health and safety laws, IHG expects hotels to follow its best practices and guidelines, which it has now supplemented with additional COVID-19 cleanliness guidance, training and information. It's introduced response teams to provide round-the-clock assistance to hotels and increased the frequency of cleaning of public areas and high-touch points in guest rooms. IHG has advised all hotels on cleaning products and protocols to deal with COVID-19. It's also reviewing its food and beverage service.

### Marriott launches Cleanliness Council

Launched in April, the Marriott Global Cleanliness Council will develop new hospitality standards to minimize risk and enhance safety for staff and guests.<sup>8</sup> It's seeking internal contributions from experts in housekeeping, engineering, food safety, occupational health and employee well-being. Outside experts are providing advice on food safety, public health and infectious diseases.

In the coming months, Marriott is introducing new sanitation technologies, including electrostatic sprayers using disinfectants recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization. This will enhance the cleaning of guest rooms, lobbies, gyms and other public areas. Marriott is also testing the use of ultraviolet light to sanitize guest keys and employee devices. It's already using hospital-grade disinfectant for more-frequent cleaning and placing disinfecting wipes in guest rooms.

Marriott is installing signage to remind guests about social distancing and removing furniture in communal areas. It also offers contactless options for check-in/out, room access, requests and room service. Marriott may add partitions at front desks and will provide employees with masks and gloves.

### Radisson Hotel Group introduces cleaning protocol

Radisson informed all hotels about essential preparatory and prevention measures.<sup>9</sup> These include hygiene measures, such as increased cleaning and sanitizing frequency, and guidelines on handling suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 or quarantine lockdowns. These are adjusted in line with recommendations and guidelines issued by local governments and health authorities. At some hotels, guests are warned to expect some disruption to food service, pools, fitness centers and other amenities.

In May, Radisson announced the Radisson Hotels Safety Protocol, a new program of in-depth cleanliness and disinfection procedures, developed in partnership with SGS, an inspection, verification, testing and certification company.<sup>10</sup> The protocols will be adjusted based on local requirements and recommendations.

Guidelines include hand sanitizing stations at all entrances, the use of personal protective equipment and screens, enhanced and more frequent disinfection and cleaning, social distancing in all areas, staff training and reiteration of food safety standards.

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<sup>8</sup> [Business Travel News](#), April 21, 2020

<sup>9</sup> [Radisson Hotels](#), April 20, 2020

<sup>10</sup> [Hotel Management](#), May 6, 2020

Radisson will introduce an official label of cleanliness and disinfection issued by SGS, confirmed through a centralized validation process. Individual hotels can receive an approval label after completing a comprehensive local audit.

### Wyndham provides information and guidance

Wyndham has provided all hotels in its global network with guidelines and information from organizations, including the World Health Organization (WHO) and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), detailing how to identify COVID-19 symptoms and how to mitigate its transmission<sup>11</sup>. Wyndham has also partnered with third parties, such as hygiene technology company Ecolab, so that all hotels can access cleaning and disinfecting supplies. It's also offering training to help hotels achieve the highest standards of cleanliness, disinfection and hygiene.

Health and safety is also a cornerstone of Count on Us, a long-term initiative launched by Wyndham to build guest confidence.<sup>12</sup> Rolling out in the coming weeks, health and hygiene initiatives across Wyndham's U.S. hotels include:

- Enhanced cleaning and disinfection of guestrooms and public spaces using Ecolab's EPA-approved disinfectants to deliver a consistent cleaning experience nationwide.
- Easy access to COVID-19 health essentials with critical products delivered to U.S. hotels within the next 30 days. Items will include face masks for staff and hand sanitizers and disinfectant wipes for guests.
- Delivering on the AHLA's Safe Stay commitments to deliver best practices and guidelines on hotel cleaning, social interactions and workplace protocols.
- A visible commitment to ensure guests and hotel staff can physically see cleanliness and sanitization efforts and trust in their impact.

### Other global chains

#### Four Seasons introduces Lead With Care

Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts is working with Johns Hopkins Medicine International (JHMI) to validate its new global health and safety program, Lead With Care.<sup>13</sup> The two organizations have set up a COVID-19 Advisory Board to ensure health and safety decisions and procedures are based on the latest scientific knowledge. JHMI will also provide ongoing, real-time guidance as the COVID-19 situation evolves. This includes a joint response team on hand to provide guidance to hotels facing COVID-19 situations.

Lead With Care is built on the principles of care, trust and service and it will be implemented at Four Seasons hotels worldwide. The program includes:

- Enhanced cleanliness
  - Hygiene officer appointed at each hotel to implement enhanced cleaning
  - Rooms disinfected daily with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved products, followed by blacklight inspection by room attendants
  - Retraining of housekeeping teams on all cleaning protocols

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<sup>11</sup> [Hospitality Net](#), April 14, 2020

<sup>12</sup> [Hotel Management](#), May 4, 2020

<sup>13</sup> [Hotel Management](#), May 14, 2020

- Hourly cleaning of public areas with extra attention to frequented areas – front desk counters and public restrooms
- Introduction of electrostatic spraying, air purification and UV technology for HVAC systems
- Heightened guest safety and comfort
  - Lead With Care kits in each guestroom providing masks, hand sanitizer and wipes, with additional masks supplied on demand
  - Social distancing embedded in all guest services: contactless check-in and housekeeping, appropriately spaced fitness equipment, modified spa menu and services
  - A la carte restaurant service with digital menus whenever possible
  - In room dining with contactless delivery
  - Investment in Four Seasons App and Chat providing guests with real-time, contactless interactions.
- Empowered employees
  - Training to ensure employees deliver Lead With Care procedures in a manner that balances guest safety with personal reassurance and comfort.
  - Training to enable employees to follow health and safety protocols with confidence
  - Ensure all employees understand the disease and its transmission, and have guidance on social distancing and the use of protective equipment
  - Training to ensure staff continue to deliver personalized care in the absence of close contact (with guests) and limited face-to-face contact

### Kempinski introduces white glove service

Luxury chain Kempinski Hotels has introduced “white glove service” to boost confidence post-COVID-19.<sup>14</sup> As hotels reopen, they will adopt this new service standard to ensure they align with regional health and safety regulations as they evolve. A 50-page document advises staff to carry gloves during all guest interactions and details compliance with government regulations on masks. Kempinski is also introducing masks and hand sanitizer as guestroom amenities. All furniture in public areas has been rearranged to adhere to social distancing rules.

### Stay Safe with Melia

To enable it to gradually reopen its hotels, Melia Hotels International has worked with certification organization Bureau Veritas to ensure it complies with the most rigorous health and safety standards. In addition to certification, Melia has also worked with relevant organizations and health authorities in Spain to prepare a COVID-19 guide for hotels to be applied across its global portfolio of hotels.

Melia has developed the Stay Safe with Melia program, detailing protocols and measures to optimize hygiene and disinfection. The program also includes the appointment in each hotel of a staff member responsible for guest emotional wellbeing and verifying compliance with processes designed to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Specific features of the program include:

- A post-COVID-19 cleaning and disinfection plan endorsed by Diversey

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<sup>14</sup> [Breaking Travel News](#), April 30, 2020

- Recommendations on occupational health as hotel employees return to work
- Innovation and technology to minimize physical contact between guests and staff and guarantee the safety of facilities
- A global post-COVID-19 operations guide
- Brand standards adapted to avoid the risks of infection in processes associated with food and beverages, the in-room experience, wellness, entertainment, etc.
- A technical facilities and maintenance guide post-COVID-19

### Shangri-La Hotels following WHO and local guidelines

Hotels across the Shangri-La Hotels & Resorts, Kerry Hotels, Traders Hotels and Hotel Jen brands are following health and hygiene guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO) and local health agencies. To minimize the spread of COVID-19 and safeguard the health of guests and employees, hotels are taking a number of precautionary measures:<sup>15</sup>

- Limousines used for airport transfers are disinfected before and after each use
- Sanitizing disinfectant floor mats at hotel entrances
- Temperature screening at all key entry points, with sanitizers at guest contact points
- Guests must fill in health and travel declaration forms.
- Face masks, hand sanitizers and other protective are available for guests
- Arriving luggage and parcels are disinfected
- Anti-bacterial soap and hand sanitizers in public washrooms. Cubicles cleaned with hospital grade disinfectant, especially high touch points, disinfected every 20 minutes
- Guestroom disinfection following check out
- Use of U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) listed disinfectants
- Enhanced daily sanitization of hotel linen.
- Individual packaging of guest laundry to avoid contamination.
- All employees professionally trained on hygiene and sanitation protocols, and equipped with personal protective equipment (PPE)
- Temporary closure of swimming pools, hot whirlpool baths, saunas and steam rooms.

## Regional chains

### Anantara develops Stay with Peace of Mind

Anantara, which operates a portfolio of 41 hotels across Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, is implementing new health and hygiene measures to reassure travelers.<sup>16</sup> A Health & Safety committee made up of senior executives and industry experts is developing the “Stay with Peace of Mind” program, building on existing health and safety measures.

Every Anantara property will have a “Guest Guardian,” who is responsible for ensuring hotels comply with guidelines based on advice from organizations like hygiene companies Ecolab and Diversey. All

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<sup>15</sup> [Shangri-La Group](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Luxury Travel Advisor](#), April 23, 2020

hotels will continue to comply with local government and World Health Organization guidelines on health and safety.

All hotels are implementing enhanced levels of sanitation, using Environmental Protection Agency-approved disinfectants in public areas, fitness centers and pools, and in guestrooms. Enhanced hygiene measures will include use of electrostatic spray technology, hand sanitizers and hotel key card disinfection.

Hotels will also ensure social distancing is adopted during fitness and wellness activities, when dining and shopping within the hotel.

Anantara is also working with Siam Ocean Technology to introduce heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) with high performance air filtration.

### G6 Hospitality launches Clean@6 cleanliness initiative

G6 Hospitality, parent of Motel 6 and Studio 6, has launched Clean@6, a cleanliness initiative for its 1,400 hotels across Canada and the U.S.<sup>17</sup> It builds on the industry standards set by the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA) in its Safe Stay guidelines.

Elements of the initiative include more frequent cleaning of public areas, hand sanitizer stations, social distancing, transparent hygiene guards at check-in, increased communication on COVID-19 best practices, employee training, and staff use of masks and disposable gloves when in the hotel. Hotel staff are not allowed to enter any occupied room.

G6 Hospitality has partnered with Corporate Medical Advisors, a subsidiary of International SOS, to review and provide ongoing guidance on its COVID-19 operating protocols. It's also working with Diversey to supply U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-registered disinfectants.

### Loews Hotels enhances safety and cleanliness protocols

Loews Hotels has introduced enhanced safety and cleanliness protocols.<sup>18</sup> As a member of AHLA's Safe Stay advisory council, these are similar to measures introduced by other chains. Loews is cleaning more frequently using U.S. Environmental Protection Agency-approved products from Ecolab. Staff must wear masks, hand sanitizer stations have been added to high-traffic guest areas, the number of passengers using elevators at any one time has been limited, and room service is delivered in disposable eco-friendly containers and left outside the door for a contactless experience.

Rooms are kept vacant for 48 hours after guest check-out. Guests are encouraged to use Loews' Chat Your Service app for communicating with room service, concierge and the front desk. Staff and suppliers have their temperatures checked using no-touch scanners.

Loews will continue to adjust its guidelines and protocols in accordance with advice from the World Health Organization, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and local authorities.

### NH Hotels introducing hygiene assessment seal

Madrid-based NH Hotel Group is collaborating with inspection company SGS on a project to formalize health precautions.<sup>19</sup> New processes, including changes to hygiene and disinfection protocols, staff

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<sup>17</sup> [Business Travel News](#), May 8, 2020

<sup>18</sup> [Business Travel News](#), May 12, 2020

<sup>19</sup> [Hotels Mag](#), April 28, 2020

training and monitoring and control of the new measures, will be introduced to ensure each hotel qualifies for an assessment seal. The NH Collection Barbizon Palace hotel in Amsterdam and the NH Nacional in Madrid will be the first hotels to be certified to the new health standards.

### Palladium Hotel Group introduces new health and safety protocols

Palladium Hotel Group has developed new health and safety protocols based on WHO recommendations and expert authorities in the six countries in which it operates, including the Dominican Republic, Mexico and Spain.<sup>20</sup> New measures include:

- Reinforcing cleaning and disinfection in all hotel spaces, including guestrooms, communal areas, meeting and event spaces and staff work areas, as well as transport vehicles and luggage
- Hand sanitizers throughout properties and within rooms
- Infrared temperature checks of employees, suppliers and guests, especially in the entrance areas and closed spaces, such as restaurants, the gym, spa and children's areas
- Staff use of masks, gloves and disposable paper items – all also available in guestrooms
- Single-use products to minimize contact
- Expanding medical services

All hotels will require and monitor social distancing. Guests may have to reserve services like dining and gym use. An enhanced room service will be developed as an alternative to using restaurants.

### Red Lion Hotels Corp. enhances cleanliness

Red Lion Hotels Corp. has released enhanced cleanliness guidelines for its properties, including measures recommended by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the WHO, as well as standards released by the American Hotel & Lodging Association.<sup>21</sup> These include promoting social distancing, increased frequency and enhancement of cleaning and more options for contactless check-in, check-out and payment.

### Scandic Hotels increases cleaning and hygiene

Nordic hotel chain Scandic Hotels has put in place procedures, plans and routines to ensure guests feel safe when staying at one of its properties.<sup>22</sup> Hotels follow guidelines and recommendations from local authorities. It has provided all properties with information about COVID-19 and management instructions. It has increased cleaning and hygiene protocols, regularly disinfecting high-touch points, such as door handles, card terminals and elevator buttons. Disinfectant dispensers are available in all public areas.

## Alternative accommodation

### Airbnb enhances cleaning protocol

Airbnb has launched the Enhanced Cleaning Initiative, a standardized protocol for cleaning and sanitization. It developed the protocol for hosts using guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's published standards, experts including a former U.S. Surgeon General, and companies

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<sup>20</sup> [Travel Agent Central](#), May 6, 2020

<sup>21</sup> [Business Travel News](#), May 6, 2020

<sup>22</sup> [Scandic Hotels](#)

in hospitality and medical hygiene, such as Ecolab, a supplier of water, hygiene and infection prevention solutions and services.

From May, hosts can take part in a learning and certification program. This will include information on COVID-19 prevention and approved disinfectants. It also recommends hosts wait 24-hours before entering a property after a guest's departure. Listings enrolled in the new cleaning program will be available for stays as soon as enhanced cleaning is completed. Hosts unable to commit to the new protocols can opt into Booking Buffer, which creates a 72-hour vacancy period between stays.

#### Note

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly evolving, and the situation is changing on almost an hourly basis. The information presented in this report represents the latest view as of May 15, 2020.

Do you have questions or comments regarding this report? Please email [mike.eggleson@bcdtravel.co.uk](mailto:mike.eggleson@bcdtravel.co.uk) to share your thoughts.