



MANAGING INCIDENTS OF EXTREME VIOLENCE

The events of last year's brutal mass shooting in Las Vegas were a wake-up call to the entire hospitality industry. Extreme violence within the hospitality industry is a clear and present danger. While prevention of these senseless acts is always the primary goal, what should a hotel do in the event an unthinkable act of violence occurs?

Having the right protocols in place and initiating them can often mitigate the effects of a violent occurrence on a hotel's premises. The proper response protocol can also help limit liability if a violent incident takes place. It is essential that every staff member is aware of and trained in the proper sequence of steps to take during an act of extreme violence.

Understanding your legal obligations can also help you reduce the risk to your business in the wake of a violent attack. To ensure that you have the tools to manage an incident of extreme violence at your business, we have prepared five helpful tips to ensure that you are prepared to respond efficiently and with comprehensiveness.

1 MAKE AN EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EVACUATION PLAN

All hotels are legally obligated to have a basic emergency response and evacuation plan, which complies with local law enforcement guidelines, to allow for the safe evacuation of guests and employees during an emergency. It is crucial to reevaluate this plan to make sure it includes protocols for handling escalating violent confrontations and potential gun violence. It is also recommended that local law enforcement have the most recent building schematics of the hotel premises, in the event of an ongoing incident. Consider implementing a shelter-in-place strategy and include those details with the evacuation plans. An emergency notification system is also essential to alerting hotel guests of a developing situation.

2 TRAIN STAFF TO WORK WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

Appoint and convene a crisis management team that is trained to verify threats and work with law enforcement officials. This team must be trained in listening and reacting to multiple attack scenarios, recognizing and reacting to the sound of gunshots, knowing when to call 911 and how to respond properly to the requests and needs of law enforcement officials. Police and emergency medical staff are highly trained in dealing with extreme acts of violence, and it is best to let them take the lead in controlling an ongoing violent situation. Should anyone on your staff take actions that were better suited to be handled by law enforcement or medical authorities, it could lead to unwanted liability claims, should something go wrong.

3 POST-CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

If an event does occur, make sure that your staff knows who the appropriate designated spokesperson is for the hotel. All inquiries should be directed to this person and no other employee should respond to media or other inquiries, regardless of their position. Employees should never volunteer any information regarding insurance coverage or claim responsibility, and if an injured third party asks specifically about the hotel's insurance, immediately refer them to your insurance agent or broker.

4 SUBMIT A CLAIM

Even if you are unsure whether the incident will result in any claims, fill out a claim report and submit it to your insurance broker immediately. It is essential that your broker be aware of all the facts regarding a violent occurrence. Remember to preserve all records, documents, security-video footage or any other evidence pertaining to the incident and make it available to your insurance broker in case a claim is filed. It is important to educate staff on who (and how they) should communicate with law enforcement or outside investigators and attorneys after a violent incident.

5 POST-ATTACK CONSIDERATIONS

In the days, weeks, or months following an incident of extreme violence, how will your hotel respond to victims of the violence? Consider and plan for immediate crisis response. How will your hotel communicate with concerned relatives and friends during and immediately after a violent incident? Will the hotel consider payment of victim benefits such as funeral or medical costs?