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# Introduction to Housekeeping Department and Its Responsibilities

House keeping is the fundamental art of hygiene laying stress on maintaining any establishment absolutely clean. The purpose is to ensure a clean person and surroundings. The function is to ensure the comfort of all guests who stay in the establishment by arranging for regular cleaning of all public and personal areas and providing other services consistent with the type of establishment. The housekeeping department is responsible for cleanliness, maintenance and aesthetic upkeep of the hotel. The house keeping department plays an important role by not only making a room look appealing to the guest, it also ensures the basic needs of their comfort and security. The personal effort of the housekeeping department has a direct role in fulfilling the guest expectations from a hotel. The housekeeping department is located at the back of the house and is a minor revenue generating department but plays an important role in assisting the front office in sale of hotel rooms and earning profit.

A large amount of money is invested in construction of a hotel therefore the long life of floor surfaces, wall finishes, floor covering, furniture, and other items is important to ensure a long life. This can be done with a little care, regular cleaning and maintenance by the cleaning staff. The housekeeping department is responsible for all the aspects of the cleaning in the hotel. It is an important point for the reputation of the hotel and for the guest because it creates a pleasant and hygienic environment.

## **The housekeeping department is responsible for the following:**

1. The cleanliness and the maintenance of the hotel.
2. For the purchase of, labeling, laundering and maintenance of staff uniforms for all employees of the hotel.
3. For laundering, ironing of guest clothing or articles.
4. For interior decoration, flower arrangement
5. For the purchase and economical use of all guest supplies eg. soap, shampoo, dental kits etc , cleaning and sanitary equipments used by the department eg. brushes, brooms etc .
6. For purchase and maintenance of HK equipments.

## **The housekeeping functions may vary according to the following:**

### **Location:**

Housekeeping functions in a hotel are required all twenty-four hours of the day but the rush and duty hours will vary according to the location of the establishment eg. in case of a hotel located in a city there will be a larger number of guest room and more staff members will be required in comparison to hotel in a small town where a smaller team is sufficient to carry-out the housekeeping operations. If the hotel is near an air-port the housekeeping staff is on duty all twenty hours since it has to be in harmony with the flight timing and there will be a large turn-over of guest who will be staying in the hotel usually for not more than a day, may be in between flights.

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### **The Size, Type and Design of the Building:**

If the hotel building is old fashioned and spread out horizontally the staff required will be larger in number in comparison to a modern compact type of hotel. In the older type it is very expensive to provide the modern amenities and so a lot of manual labour is required to ensure comfortable stay for the guest. In the modern type of establishment smaller number of staff members are required since there is more stress on self service.

### **The Policy of the Management:**

If the management policy is to employ outside contractors for laundry, electrical repairs, heavy cleaning, sanitation, horticulture, flower arrangement etc. the number of the regular staff member of the house keeping will be considerably reduced. However if the management policy is to provide the above services by the hotel itself the house keeping department will require a larger number of staff members.

### **Type of Establishment:**

In case of a luxury or commercial establishment more personalized services like valet, baby sitter, personal maid etc are provided in comparison to welfare or service establishment where only the basic services are provided to the guest.

### **Type of Services Provided:**

It depends on the management policy whether they want to provide highly personalized service, eg. packing and unpacking for the guest, preparing the bed for the night, polishing shoes, providing room service, hair dressers and maids for dressing etc. or the service might be minimum involving the cleaning of the room and preparing the bed in the hotel as incase of a motel.

### **Functions of housekeeping department:**

1. Interior decoration
2. Cleaning of public areas and personal areas
3. Flower arrangement
4. Valet and personal maids
5. House porters
6. Linen supply
7. Laundry
8. Personnel training
9. Maintenance of h.k equipment
10. Store keeping
11. Room service (limite
12. Certain personalized service like (shoe polishing, packing for guest)

### **The Functions of Housekeeping Department in Hotel and Catering Unit:**

Large Hotels, Residential clubs and passenger liners Hotels and Motels Smaller hotels, Inns,

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Boarding Houses and small private hotel Hospitals, College, Schools, Hostels and other Institutions

The main function of house keeping is to ensure the comforts of those who stay in the establishment by arranging for the regular cleaning of all guest room, public areas etc and providing other services consistent with the type of establishment that is storage and control of linen stocks, housekeeping equipment and cleaning material.

Laundering of hotel linen and guest personal linen, Laundering services may be undertaken within the unit ,provision of laundry-mats Laundering is absent Laundering service may be undertaken specially in case of larger establishment.

Floral decoration will be provided throughout the establishment Floral decoration generally provided in the public areas of the establishment and in some hotels may extend to the guest bedroom also Floral decoration may be provided in a limited scale.

Room service is generally provided by the restaurant staff, the house keeping staff will be required for certain duties Room service may be limited or totally absent Limited room service available and this may be provided by the house keeping staff Other than in hospitals, room service is not provided.

Maintenance of valet services and provision of staff for the ladies powder room.

The cleanliness of corridors, public areas (lounges and waiting rooms) offices, passenger lifts etc. may all come within the scope of housekeeping department.

Role and importance of housekeeping department in the hotel:

The housekeeping department plays a major role in enhancing the reputation of a hotel. It is the personal effort of the housekeeping department in providing a guest with his expectations which has a direct bearing on a guest experience in a hotel as a whole. The services provided by the housekeeping dept plays an important role in determining whether the guest is satisfied with the hotel or not as the guest spends most of his hotel time in his room. If the guest is satisfied with the services they will not only return to the hotel but also recommended it to other people.

It is the duty of the housekeeping department to maintain the sales appeal of the guest rooms as well as all public areas. The primary objective of the housekeeping department is guest satisfaction. The housekeeping department is responsible for improving the guest occupancy rate. In a hotel any unsold room is total revenue loss as a room unsold for a day is revenue lost for ever. Thus the importance of the role of the housekeeping department can not be marginalized.

### **Role of Housekeeping in Guest Satisfaction and Repeat Business:**

- Providing and maintaining safe and hygienic conditions of stay
- Providing immaculate rooms and clean public areas.
- Odour free atmosphere and eco-friendly environment.
- Appropriate décor.

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- Spotlessly clean and properly arranged furniture and fixtures.
  - Courtesy
  - Polite and prompt service.
  - Satisfaction of guest's needs
  - Provide value for money

## **INTER DEPARTMENTAL RELATIONSHIP:**

In a hotel it is important that all departments cooperate and coordinate with each other so as to ensure the smooth running of the organization as a whole. Each department of the hotel is dependent on each other for services and information. Depending on the type and size of the hotel the work in each of the other departments may be small or large but in all cases there must be good liaison and communication with each other.

The housekeeping dept comes in contact with practically every department of the hotel and if its work is to be unhindered, friction between the department and another dept should be kept to a minimum. Amongst all co-ordination relationship in the hotel co-ordination of the housekeeping department with the front office and maintenance department is very important as they aim to provide the guest with a comfortable stay in the hotel.

### **Coordination with Front Office:**

Coordination with F.O is particularly necessary because the work of the two departments is very closely allied (selling of rooms). It is usual policy for hotels to state that rooms must be vacated by noon on the day of departure, but owing to the increased number of guests arriving early or late departure, new guest may arrive before the guest rooms have been serviced. To avoid guests being shown into untidy rooms the housekeeper should notify the front office of 'ready rooms' as soon as they become available for sale Housekeeper should also notify them when rooms are to be 'taken off' for redecoration etc, and again when they are ready for sale.

Similarly the front office must provide the H.K dept a list for expected arrival and departure for the day in advance and notify housekeeping of actual arrivals and departures as and when they occur. This helps the housekeeping department in cleaning these rooms on a priority basis so that they are available for sale by the front office.

At pre-determined hours of the day the housekeeper provides the front office with a control sheet (occupancy list, housekeeper's report or vacant room list) so that the front office may check the room occupancy board or chart to check any discrepancy in room status.

This information may also be provided with the help of the computerized room's status system where the two departments feed the information into the computer network so that it is immediately transmitted to the relevant department for verification.

The housekeeping department depends on the front office for providing important information related to room maintenance i.e. V.I.P. arrival and departure, group arrival and departure Crew in the house, special request of the guest, requirement of baby cots, bed boards or baby sitters, etc. The housekeeping department is also responsible for providing clean uniform to the front office staff.

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## **Co-ordination with Maintenance Department:**

Close cooperation is important between housekeeping and maintenance department as the maintenance department is responsible for maintenance of all furniture, fixtures and fittings in the hotel.

During room maintenance activity the housekeeping staff may come over items requiring attention, such as dripping taps, W.C. cisterns not flushing, faulty electrical plugs, malfunctioning air-conditioning units and they should report these faults immediately to the maintenance department. If a good relationship exists between the two departments, notification of an urgent repair will be dealt with at once and not just added to wait its turn on the list. However, it must be remembered that maintenance is required in other departments besides housekeeping, and thus close co-operation is most important.

The maintenance department is responsible for the routine maintenance, preventive maintenance and scheduled maintenance of the rooms. The maintenance department is also responsible for maintenance of all manual and mechanical equipments used in the housekeeping department.

On its part the housekeeping department should ensure that its staff should handle all equipments with care. The housekeeping staff should provide immediate access to the maintenance staff when they report for carrying out maintenance work. The housekeeping department is also responsible for providing clean uniform to the maintenance department staff.

## **Coordination with Food and Beverage Department:**

The housekeeping department is responsible for providing clean linen and uniform to all food and beverage outlets including banquet hall. The housekeeping department may also take care of any flower arrangement required in the restaurant or banquet hall.

On its part the food and beverage department should ensure that the linen is used only for the purpose intended and not used for dusting or wiping purpose by the staff. The food and beverage should collect dirty trays from the guest room to the wash-up and should not leave them in the guest room or corridor for a long time.

## **Coordination with Kitchen:**

The housekeeping department is responsible for providing clean uniform to the kitchen staff whereas the kitchen department provides the housekeeping staff with staff meals.

## **Coordination with Personnel Department:**

The housekeeping department is responsible for coordination with personal department in matters relating to staff recruitment, induction programmes, staff training, wages and salary, grievance handling, staff records etc. It is important that the housekeeping department provides all necessary information to the personal department related to the above so that the personnel department may programme on schedule.

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## **Coordination with Purchase Department:**

The purchase department is responsible for procuring of all supplies required by the housekeeping department. This is done with active consultation between the purchase manager and the executive housekeeper. Close coordination is important so that the housekeeping department is provided with all necessary supplies such as cleaning material, guest amenities, stationery, linen, equipment etc. at designated time.

On its part the housekeeping department should update the purchase department of its requirement and future requirements well in advance so that the purchase department may complete its formalities in required time.

## **Co-ordination with Stores Department:**

The stores department supplies the housekeeping department with its requirements on day to day basis. The housekeeping department should inform the store of its requirements well in advance so that the store department may supply the same on time.

## **Coordination with Security Department:**

Both the housekeeping departments as well as security department are responsible for security of the guest person as well as belonging within the hotel. The housekeeping staff should inform the security immediately if they come over any suspicious activity in a hotel.

The security department is responsible for providing the staff with fire fighting training and first aid to overcome any emergency. All staff are required to report to the security in case of any fire or accident in the hotel premises.

## **Coordination with Laundry Department:**

In a hotel the housekeeping department requires a number of clean linen during the day. This linen is provided by the laundry department. The laundry department should ensure regular supply of clean linen at scheduled time. All stains should be taken care of to prevent any embarrassing situation. The housekeeping department should not over burden the laundry department by ensuring rotation of soil linen to the laundry at regular interval of the day.