

A photograph showing a person's legs in blue jeans and black sneakers walking on a tiled floor, pulling a black rolling suitcase. The background is blurred, showing other people in a public space like an airport or train station.

## The Wary Traveler

A gunman walked into an Oneida Nation casino in Wisconsin on May 1, 2021, and opened fire. Two people lost their lives and one was seriously injured. The shooter was a fired employee. In March 2019, a hotel in Natick, Massachusetts, evacuated guests and employees just before 3:00 a.m. when one person was shot in the hotel atrium, suffering minor injuries.

Active shooters a growing concern for many travelers. As more shootings occur in random business locations, travelers are looking for assurances that they will be safe.

However, shooters are not the only threat today's travelers face — civil unrest is also on the rise. On May 1, 2021, violence broke out during protests in southwest Portland, Oregon. This was just one of a number of demonstrations that ended in damaged buildings and broken windows in the Portland area.

For any hotel, theme park, or tourist attraction trying to conduct business and attract visitors, what's happening locally – or even nationally – can negatively impact the bottom line. For an industry that is already struggling due to a global pandemic, one more issue could be devastating financially.

The hospitality industry is clawing to fight its way back. By the end of this year, some estimates set the market at reaching \$412 billion, up from \$348 billion in 2020. For an industry that topped \$570 billion in 2019, it's a sign that improvements are on the way.<sup>1</sup>

Whether the gains will be enough soon enough remains to be seen. Whatever the outcome, the hospitality industry is tasked with tightening safety measures while trying to attract guests.

In some cases, when it comes to COVID-19, the message sent to visitors is twofold – the venue's safety measures are now framed as reasons for visiting. Large chain hotels like Marriott and Hyatt highlight guest safety on their home website pages. Six Flags theme parks have a COVID-19 disclaimer on their home page. Disney Parks has added capacity limits and COVID-19 warnings to their page.

### **SECURITY: NO GUARANTEES**

Even so, no hospitality venue can guarantee safety. However, what they can do is increase safety measures, document all efforts and put safety at the forefront of their operations. Some of the additional safety measures any venue can implement include:

- Security cameras in public spaces and around the property and buildings
  - Improve COVID-19 protocols and protections
  - Have a solid security process for terminating employees
  - Review all safety efforts to ensure they are nondiscriminatory
  - Travel safety alerts
  - Discussion with local law enforcement to implement a plan for the potential of an active shooter situation.
  - Perform active shooter drills and training for staff members
- 

## Cameras

Monitoring the traffic in and around your property can do a lot to deter bad actors. Use signage to alert everyone that cameras and video monitoring is in use 24/7.

## Improved COVID-19 Protocols

Are your staff following CDC-recommended guidelines? Is your cleaning staff being monitored regularly to ensure COVID-19 protocols are being followed? Educate management staff and employees on protocols for dealing with employee who are ill or have tested positive for COVID-19. Also, consider using keyless access to hotel rooms and to park attractions. Another valuable consideration might be allowing guests to pay for meals via cell phone apps to further reduce contact.

## Terminated Employee Procedures

When an employee is terminated, they should be accompanied to their work area to clean out their belongings, and then escorted off the property. Consider adopting a card key system for employees to gain access to the facility — that can add an additional layer of protection for guests and employees. Conduct thorough background checks on all potential employees, check references and consider a social media search on potential candidates. Practice active shooter drills.

## Safety and Discrimination

While many establishments are limiting the number of guests, some are screening visitors as they arrive. The practice could be landing plenty of venues in hot water should they not have a written procedure that is closely followed for all participants/guests. If one visitor is screened, all should be. Signage prohibiting firearms should be prominently displayed, as should signage on doors and in public spaces about mask requirements and distancing.

## Safety Alerts

Train and educate staff with regularly scheduled security meetings with a written protocol in how to respond to security emergencies such as a riot/protest, health threat or active shooter. A plan of action should be spelled out informing visitors of any unrest in the area. Many hotels in other countries include information on what areas are not safe for foreign guests, how to safely navigate the area and what threats to be aware of. Include links to federal and local travel advisory sites.

## BRINGING SAFETY TO THE FOREFRONT

As the hospitality industry begins to receive guests again, focusing on guest and employee safety is the first step toward winning the confidence of visitors.

Communicate your efforts to improve safety and educate your visitors on how to move around safely while visiting the area. By creating a more safety-centric culture, and by improving transparency about your organization's safety measures, your guests can feel more comfortable when visiting.

**For more information, please contact Heather Gillingham at [heather.gillingham@nfp.com](mailto:heather.gillingham@nfp.com).**

## Sources

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.reportlinker.com/p06018958/Hospitality-Global-Market-Report-COVID-19-Impact-and-Recovery-to.html?utm\\_source=GNW](https://www.reportlinker.com/p06018958/Hospitality-Global-Market-Report-COVID-19-Impact-and-Recovery-to.html?utm_source=GNW)