
HOSPITALITY CRISIS RESPONSE PLAYBOOK

Guest Safety Incident & Reputation Management Guide

Use this playbook to respond quickly and professionally to incidents affecting guests, tenants, or your property's reputation.

INCIDENT SEVERITY CLASSIFICATION

LEVEL 1 - CRITICAL (Activate Full Crisis Response)

- Guest/tenant death on property
- Serious injury requiring hospitalization
- Active threat or violence
- Major property damage (fire, flood, structural failure)
- Health code violation requiring closure
- Data breach affecting guest information
- Viral negative incident (video, social media)

LEVEL 2 - SIGNIFICANT (Activate Partial Crisis Response)

- Minor guest/tenant injury
- Security incident (theft, unauthorized access)
- Service failure affecting multiple guests
- Property damage not requiring evacuation
- Isolated health/safety complaint
- Employee misconduct affecting guests

LEVEL 3 - ROUTINE (Standard Incident Response)

- Single guest complaint
- Minor property maintenance issue
- Isolated service recovery situation
- Standard guest relations issue

This playbook focuses on first 30 minutes of a Level 1 incident

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE (First 30 Minutes)

Guest Safety First

- Ensure guest safety and provide immediate assistance
- Call 911 if medical emergency or active threat
- Evacuate affected area if safety hazard exists
- Provide first aid if trained staff available
- Secure the scene to prevent additional incidents
- Move other guests away from incident area

Crisis Team Notification

- General Manager notified immediately
- Director of Security notified
- Director of Operations notified
- Human Resources notified (if employee involved)
- Corporate/ownership notified (per escalation protocol)
- Legal counsel notified (if serious injury, death, or liability concern)

Initial Documentation

- Incident report form started (time, location, involved parties, witnesses)
- Photographs taken of scene (if safe and appropriate)
- Security camera footage preserved
- Guest registration information secured
- Witness contact information collected
- Staff involved identified and statements begun

GUEST/FAMILY COMMUNICATION

For Injured Guest:

DO:

- Express genuine concern for their wellbeing
- Ensure they receive appropriate medical attention
- Provide contact information for property management
- Document all communications
- Offer reasonable accommodations (transportation, room change, etc.)
- Follow up within 24 hours to check on recovery

DON'T:

- ✗ Admit fault or liability
- ✗ Offer specific compensation before consulting legal/insurance
- ✗ Make promises you can't keep
- ✗ Discuss incident details with other guests
- ✗ Allow staff to speculate about causes
- ✗ Post about incident on social media

Sample Initial Statement to Guest: "I'm so sorry this happened. Your safety and wellbeing are our top priority. We want to make sure you receive the medical attention you need. [Property representative name and contact] will stay in close contact with you. Please don't hesitate to reach out if you need anything."

For Guest Family (in case of serious injury/death):

- Designate single point of contact (typically GM or owner)
- Provide private space for family on property if needed
- Assist with logistics (travel arrangements, accommodations, transportation)
- Coordinate with law enforcement and medical examiner as appropriate
- Document all communications carefully
- Express sympathy without admitting liability

INSURANCE & LEGAL NOTIFICATION**Within First Hour:**

- General liability insurance carrier notified
- Claim number obtained and documented
- Insurance adjuster contact information secured
- Legal counsel notified (if serious incident)
- Workers' compensation notified (if employee injured)

STAFF COMMUNICATION

Immediate Briefing (Within 1 Hour): Brief all staff who may interact with guests:

Key Messages for Staff:

- Factual summary of what happened (no speculation)

- Current status (situation resolved, ongoing investigation, etc.)
- Guest wellbeing update (if appropriate to share)
- What staff should say if guests ask questions
- Who to direct media inquiries to (never speak to media directly)
- Reminder: Do not post about incident on personal social media

Sample Staff Script for Guest Questions: "We're aware of the situation and our management team is handling it. We're doing everything we can to ensure all our guests are safe and comfortable. If you have specific concerns, please contact [front desk/management name] who can provide you with more information."

OPERATIONAL RESPONSE

Service Recovery for Affected Guests:

- Move guests to different rooms if they request (at no charge)
- Offer refund or comp stay for significantly impacted guests
- Provide transportation if needed
- Upgrade amenities as gesture of goodwill
- Waive cancellation fees for guests choosing to leave
- Document all compensation provided

Facility Response:

- Complete safety inspection of affected area
- Make necessary repairs before reopening area
- Deep clean/sanitize affected area
- Review and update safety protocols if deficiencies identified
- Brief staff on any procedure changes
- Document all corrective actions taken

Guest Communication (Broader Property):

- Decide if incident requires communication to all current guests
- Prepare brief statement or letter if needed
- Train staff on how to address questions
- Monitor guest satisfaction scores for impact
- Implement extra service touches for reassurance

COMMON HOSPITALITY CRISIS SCENARIOS

Bed Bug Complaint:

- Isolate affected room immediately
- Bring in professional pest inspector within 24 hours
- Inspect adjacent rooms
- Communicate honestly with guest (relocate, refund, comp stay)
- If confirmed: treat property comprehensively, not just affected room
- Update online listing if required by local law

Food Poisoning / Foodborne Illness:

- Document incident details and food consumed
- Contact health department if multiple guests affected
- Preserve food samples if available
- Review kitchen practices and temperatures
- Inspect food storage and preparation areas
- Offer medical expense reimbursement (consult insurance first)

Guest-on-Guest Violence:

- Contact police immediately
- Separate involved parties
- Provide victim assistance (medical, police report, alternate room)
- Preserve security footage
- Trespass aggressive party if appropriate
- Review security protocols and staffing

Data Breach / Credit Card Compromise:

- Activate data breach response plan
- Notify affected guests within required timeframe (varies by state)
- Offer credit monitoring services
- Notify card processors and banks
- Hire forensic IT firm to investigate
- Implement enhanced data security

Natural Disaster (Hurricane, Flood, Earthquake):

- Activate evacuation plan if required
- Assist guests with alternate arrangements
- Provide regular updates via text/email
- Document all property damage thoroughly
- Coordinate with insurance adjuster



- Communicate reopening timeline clearly

Need Help Managing a Hospitality Crisis?

If you're currently responding to a guest incident or reputation crisis:

📞 Schedule a free 30-minute consultation: [Select a Date & Time - Calendly](#)

✉️ Email us: [Hello@crisisiqpartners.com](mailto>Hello@crisisiqpartners.com)

Take our 3-minute Crisis Readiness Scorecard: [Crisis IQ Scorecard](#)

Want to prepare your property before the next crisis?

Schedule a Hospitality Crisis Readiness Assessment

Download our Guest Incident Communication Templates

Request Crisis Response Training for your management team

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