

CLHG unpacks its enhanced hygiene and housekeeping protocols

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Operating a hotel during the time of Covid-19 brings about its own challenges, chief among those is the safety of staff and guests. Cleanliness, hygiene and sanitisation have taken on a new role, which is equally important now during the lockdown as it will be afterwards. In fact, "business as usual" just got an overhaul.



City Lodge Hotel Group was one of the first hotel chains in South Africa to announce its stringent cleaning protocols introduced at all 62 of its hotels in South Africa, Southern and East Africa. As the pandemic worsened and South Africa entered a phase of extreme lockdown starting 26 March 2020, the group temporarily suspended services at most of its hotels. Seven of its properties stayed open as accommodation providers for quarantine guests and essential services staff. The remainder are under the watchful eye of resident hotel-sitters – staff who have agreed to stay at the hotels during the lockdown and undertake routine cleaning and maintenance.

Chief executive officer Andrew Widegger adds, “Our hotels have built a reputation for being tip-top, loving and clean (TLC) and we intend on maintaining and improving upon our operational protocols. Prior to lockdown, we implemented additional measures to ensure the safety of both our guests and our staff. These measures have been revised and fine-tuned while we provide accommodation for quarantine guests and essential services workers. These protocols will continue to be in place after we have been given permission to reopen.”

The revamped cleaning regimen is the same for quarantine hotels as it is for essential services accommodation hotels as the threat to both is the same. The only difference is that once quarantine hotels are no longer used for quarantine purposes, they will be professionally decontaminated as an additional safety measure.



An outline of the protocols for accommodating quarantine guests and essential services guests may be found on the website: www.clhg.com. While the full cleaning operations protocol is extensive, in-depth and all encompassing, factoring in all aspects of people, property and related activities, a few key points include:

- **Preparation:** Before the hotel is ready to welcome quarantine guests, all the surfaces in the hotel are treated with Surface Defence Standard Treatment (SDST). This product protects surfaces for up to 90 days, when used in conjunction with daily cleaning, and acts as a sealant prior to routine cleaning to ensure maximum safety.
- **General cleaning:** Cleaning staff now use a polycide chemical (a very strong disinfectant cleaner), to wipe down all surfaces and areas that would frequently be touched by others, including restrooms, breakfast and restaurant areas, tabletops, counters, handrails, doorknobs, office surfaces and our reception areas.
- **Room cleaning:** Quarantine guests are required to change their own linen and are requested to clean their own rooms daily. Hotel staff clean and sanitise each room every three days, excluding linen changes. When guests have checked out, departed rooms are cleaned and sanitised and as far as is possible remain unoccupied for three days. For essential services guests, hotel staff clean each room every two days and exchange linen every three days, with the remainder of the protocols being carried out. Staff are tasked with following a detailed list of cleaning practises using chemicals as specified (concentration of chemical, time left on each surface and the colour of cloth for wiping is clearly listed), all with a view to avoiding possible cross-contamination.
- **Laundry:** For both quarantine and essential services hotels, linen and towels are washed on the hottest wash cycle at 80°C. All the linen is ironed on a hot setting. Towels are tumble-dried until fully dry and hot enough to kill any potential viral matter. The laundry room is run using a set of protocols that prevents possible cross-contamination.
- **Waste:** There are clear waste disposal protocols for PPE, chemicals and refuse. All waste from the bedrooms, including the PPE worn and discarded by the cleaners, is placed in a sturdy plastic bag, tied shut and not re-opened at any time or for any reason. These plastic bags are disposed of in an outside bin and sprayed with Microcide solution, before the bin is closed. The outside of the closed bin is sprayed with the same solution.
- **Staff:** Employee safety and hygiene protocol at work encompasses travelling to the hotel, arriving at the hotel, while on shift, leaving the hotel and arriving home, as well as involves daily health screening. Personal protective equipment (PPE) includes face masks for all staff, face shields for frontline staff (reception and food and beverage), and gloves and aprons as needed for room cleaners, kitchen staff and laundry staff. Correct handwashing procedure signs have been posted above all basins. All persons entering the hotel are screened. Staff canteens have been set up for social distancing and breaks are staggered.
- **Guests:** All items on the front desk – including the pen, registration form and room key card – and the receptionist's hands are sanitised, in front of the arriving guest, prior to any guest interaction at check in. Guests are required to sanitise their hands and credit cards prior to interaction. The speed point machine is sanitised before and after every use. No cash will be accepted during this time, and accounts must be paid by credit card or cleared EFT payments only. Only one receptionist may be present behind the reception desk and guests awaiting check-in are to observe

social distancing. To prevent an infected person from checking into the hotel, guests will be required to complete and sign a questionnaire and allow their temperature to be scanned with a thermal scanner. If a guest's temperature falls within the normal range and they do not show any symptoms, they will be required to sanitise their hands and proceed to check-in. If a guest's temperature is high (actual temperature at screening should not exceed 37.5 degrees Celsius) or they have symptoms of the virus, they will not be allowed to check in and will be referred to a medical facility. Any guest, at any time during the quarantine period, who tests positive for Covid-19 will be removed from the hotel by the Department of Health and taken to an appropriate hospital. Essential services guests must be screened on arrival, and every time they return to the hotel their temperatures are taken and recorded, in accordance with the City Lodge Hotel Group's screening procedure.

This is just a snapshot of the new regimen when it comes to housekeeping in general. Each step is carefully thought through, from time and motion studies to best practice based on the latest scientific research available on preventing the spread of Covid-19. Staff training is ongoing, as is the education of guests staying in both quarantine hotels and essential services hotels.

Chief operating officer Lindiwe Sangweni-Siddo notes, "The employee and guest safety protocol aims to address the measures that each hotel, its management team and employees must take, until further notice, to reasonably ensure the health and safety of all of its stakeholders. When our hotels start to open again, the threat of Covid-19 remains until a suitable vaccine and effective treatment are found and introduced worldwide. City Lodge Hotel Group has a duty to and will do everything in its power to keep its employees and guests as safe as can be reasonably expected of an employer and leading hotel company to ensure that Covid-19 does not spread, unchecked in any of our hotels."

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