

Safety and security are a top priority for travelers. The competitive advantage of having in-room safes demonstrates reasonable care to your guests, eliminates in-room theft, meets the need of the corporate travel market, and eliminates accountability from hotel staff. Top hotel brands agree, Safemark dominates the market with safe expertise. Here are 11 important tips to consider when evaluating in-room safes:

### **Size**

Our lives today require connection to the outside world. Even when traveling for leisure, most guests carry various electronics including laptops, tablets and smartphones. Over 70% of laptops sold in the USA have a 17" screen. When selecting a safe, consider your target guest, what are they traveling with, and are you providing a safe large enough to secure all of their valuables?

### **Location**

There is nothing more annoying than having to get on your hands and knees to ensure all of your belongings are removed from the safe. Don't make the location of your safe an afterthought. Consider locating the safe at a convenient height. All safes should be easy to locate within the guest room and if possible, incorporate an internal light so guests can see what's inside.

Increase your options by selecting a safe partner with a large product portfolio to include: standard front opening safes, top opening safes, wall safes, and drawer pull out safes. Make sure your interior designers get creative and place the safe in a convenient, easy to use, and easy to access space in the guest room.

### **User Friendly for Guests**

The keypad and display on your safe should be large, ADA compliant, and visible inside cabinets or closets. We all know how dim it is inside a wardrobe making illuminated keypads are a must! The instructions must be simple, clear, visible and available in multiple languages. Select a safe that doesn't take a degree to operate. Keep it simple!

### **User Friendly for Staff**

In today's hospitality industry, employees come from many different countries, cultures, and backgrounds. Pick a safe that is easy for all of them to understand, manage, and maintain. Used correctly, information gathered from the safes could get you out of a tricky situation when presented with an alleged theft. Think "safes for dummies" and you can't go wrong.

# 11 Essential Facts for Selecting the Right Guest Room Safe

## Management Issues

One of the major management problems with most safes is that they relock with the push of a single button. Therefore, in order to unlock the safe a staff member must go to the room to override the safe. The override system should be simple to use but also smart enough to recognize each user and track their activities. The override system should also be used to open a safe that has depleted batteries.

We all know that safes often get locked and the 4-digit number is forgotten. Select a safe that gives you the ability for multiple staff members to provide an override service for guests. BUT, ensure you have a system that gives you absolute visibility as to who has done the overriding. All reports should provide the full user name and be time/date stamped. Avoid the situation of not knowing which staff member unlocked the safe or depleting staff morale by blaming the wrong person.

## Maintenance

Select a safe that uses 4 standard AA batteries which are inexpensive and widely available. Look for a simple method to measure battery level. Try replacing the batteries in the safe that you are interested in purchasing. Look at the number of screws that will have to be removed and replaced and look where they are located. For many safes, changing the batteries is a difficult and time consuming chore. Since many manufacturers inventory safes for some time before they are sold, find out if the safes have a method to keep the batteries at optimum power while they are in transit or in storage.

In the interest of your engineering department, make sure that the parts are durable, modular and easy to replace. Inspect the major components to see how easy it is to replace the PCB, the motor, or the keypad. Is the entire door replaceable?

What are the terms of the warranty and for how long will parts be available? Your safes are equipment that should last 10-15 years. At what point do you need to start paying for spare parts and will your supplier guarantee the availability of those spares for the life of the product?

## Mechanical Safety

Choose a safe that is of sturdy construction. Select one with either a recessed door or one with a laser cut door, both make breaking in via prying the door near impossible.

Ensure the safe you choose has at least two solid steel locking bolts (one is not enough) and ideally, that these engage into the frame rather than hook behind which will reduce the closing errors experienced when items get jammed in the door.

Ensure the back panel is fixed using tamper proof screws and for the ultimate in protection, you may want a tamper proof option where the keypad (and therefore the safe) is disabled when the back cover is removed.

# 11 Essential Facts for Selecting the Right Guest Room Safe

## **Mechanical Override**

Some providers offer a mechanical override system in addition to an electronic method. Make sure that the mechanical key cannot be copied and the same master key is not used at other properties. The mechanical key can be a great fail-safe system, especially if you offer a 100% guest satisfaction.

Beware though, many safes have locking systems with limited available locks. Ensure yours is unique to your property, has a high security lock that keys cannot be duplicated without the proper authority, and that locks cannot be picked or bumped. Keep the key secure on the property and you can then extend the service to your guests that they deserve.

## **Emergency Handheld Override (EHO)**

Your EHO system should be rugged and industrial strength to handle the demands of a typical hotel environment. Front line users should have minimal steps to perform an emergency opening. Make sure the EHO is password protected and has the capability to identify each user by their full name. You should look for a minimum of the last 200 entries which should include guest openings and closings, time outs, and emergency overrides. Make sure that the EHO cannot be deleted or "pumped" from the system. Ideally look for an audit system that separates guest activities from hotel activities. Also, consider how the EHO is connected to the safe. Is this easily done or expensive to replace? Is it covered under warranty?

## **Audit Trail**

An audit trail is highly recommended to protect you from a liability. A record of the last 200 operations, is highly recommended. The audit trail should be secured in the safes memory even if the power is cut off. It should record all openings/closings, shutdowns, emergency openings and system changes. All emergency openings should be identified by the full name of authorized staff members. Don't get caught having to print an audit report in the presence of a guest. While many systems sell the advantage of printing in the room, do you really want to discover you have a liability issue in front of your guest?

## **Time Out Mode**

The shutdown mode prevents openings by repetitive attempts. After several unsuccessful attempts, the safe should enable a shutdown mode for a period of time. Some properties use 30 min while others prefer a 10 min countdown, some lock the safes up for a time period beyond that of the average room clean. See if your supplier offers the flexibility to modify the length of the countdown and how many incorrect codes it takes to activate. Also consider the case where the shutdown was invoked accidentally, can your supplier perform an override to open it or do you need to wait it out?

## **In Closing**

There are a wide variety of safes on the market with varying price points. While all safes may seem the same to hotel guests, many factors should be considered before making a purchase. Remember, it's how a situation is managed when something goes wrong that makes or breaks your reputation and helps you through potential liability issues.