



New Safety Requirements for Hotels

The hotel industry will be under new safety standards later this summer and employers need to prepare for the new rules.

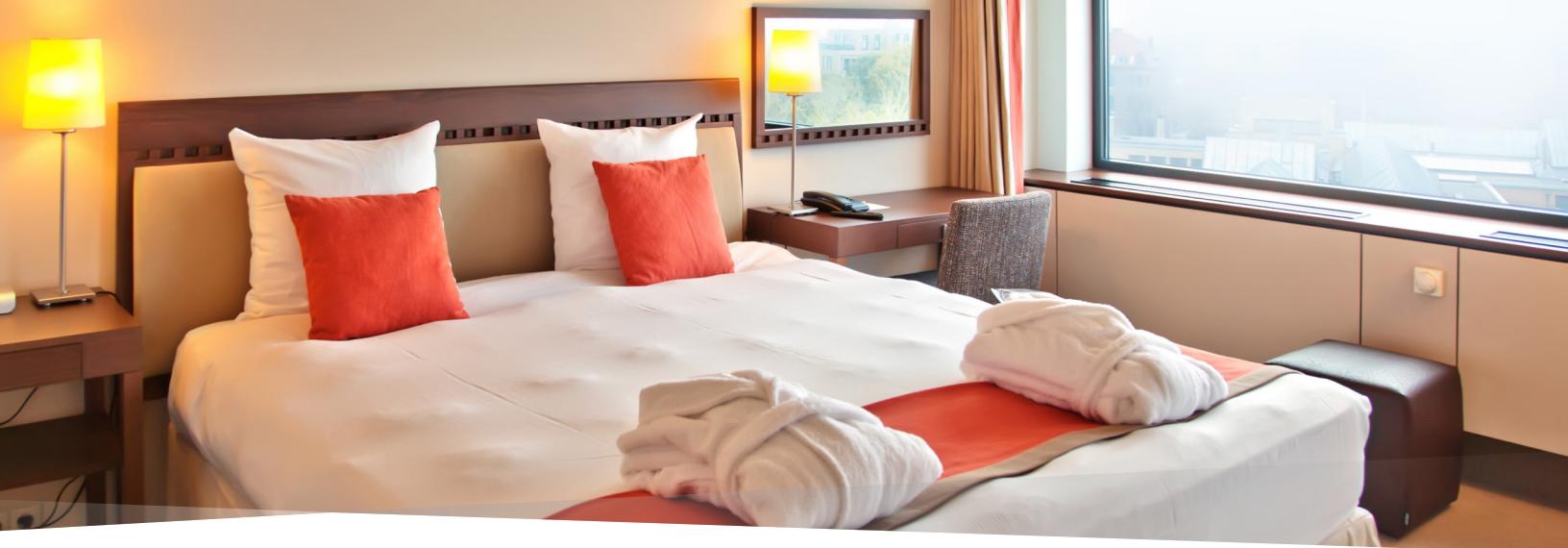
California's Office of Administrative Law gave final approval to Cal/OSHA's new hotel housekeeping standard and set an effective date of July 1st.

The standard is an effort to protect housekeepers from musculoskeletal disorders created by what labor and advocates say is an ever-increasing workload from the so-called "bed race" – providing more luxurious amenities in hotel rooms. The standard was fought vigorously by the hotel industry, which now must comply with the safety standard

The regulations require a specific new prevention program targeted at musculoskeletal injuries. Dubbed the Musculoskeletal Injury Prevention Program or MIPP, the program must address the specific hazards of housekeeping. Employers already are required to have an Injury and Illness Prevention Program that addresses their workplace hazards. Now hotels must also have and provide an MIPP.



These new regulation require a specific new prevention program targeted at musculoskeletal injuries. This program must address the specific hazards of housekeeping.



The program is required to include procedures for identifying and evaluating housekeeping hazards including an initial and annual worksite evaluation. The evaluations need to address:

- potential injury risks to housekeepers from slips, trips, and falls
- prolonged or awkward static postures
- extreme reaches or repetitive reaches above shoulder height
- lifting or forcing whole body or hand exertions
- torso bending, twisting
- kneeling and squatting
- pushing and pulling
- falling and striking objects
- pressure points where a part of the body presses against an object or surface
- excessive work rates
- and inadequate recovery time between housekeeping tasks

The MIPP also must include procedures for correcting identified hazards. Evaluations must be updated at least annually and whenever any changes are made to housekeeping operations.

Hotels must include housekeepers in designing and conducting the evaluations and identifying and evaluating potential corrective measures. If the workplace is unionized, then the housekeeper's union representative must also be included in the process.

The new regulation also includes specific measures for training workers on safety. Housekeepers and supervisors must be trained on the MIPP when it is first established. Additionally, training must be provided to all new personnel and to housekeepers who transition to other jobs that have different safety training needs than their previous position. The training requirement is also triggered if new equipment or work practices are introduced, and when the employer becomes aware of a new or previously unrecognized hazard.

And as with other safety programs, employers must be careful to record the steps they take to implement and maintain their MIPPs. The musculoskeletal program documents must be available at the worksite for review and copying by housekeepers and their designated representatives.

Cal/OSHA inspectors will be looking for these and establishments without MIPPs are subject to significant fines.