vingcard

ASSA ABLOY

How to select the best staff safety solution for your hotel operations

A guide from Vingcard

1. INTRODUCTION

The hospitality industry has continued to experience an unfortunate rise in physical assaults and other unwanted behavior directed at hotel employees that ultimately makes work environments feel unsafe. In the past few years, the voices of protest have grown louder, and the lodging industry has responded by asking for the development of hotel staff safety solutions or employee safety devices (ESD) that can provide workers with the instant assistance that they need as soon as they feel threatened.

While this has mainly been a subject of focus within the US, enhancing staff safety is soon to become a global issue as hotel brands around the world increasingly recognize the importance of ensuring a safe work environment in achieving overall improved security and operational efficiency. Although the US has spurred greater action on the subject due to strengthening regulations and deployments of staff safety solutions driven by hotel chains, other global markets are increasingly seeking to mirror the results obtained by beginning to enact their own legislation or by hotel brands making similar commitments within such regions.

"staff safety is soon to become a **global issue**"

As the topic of providing hotel employees with the safety and protection that they deserve continues to mature on a worldwide scale, the question faced by hoteliers will not be whether they should implement a staff safety solution, but whether they can implement a platform that fully addresses staff and regional market needs.

In this guide, you will learn what to look for when planning to acquire an ESD, whether it's for your motel, hotel or chain of hotels. Essential items discussed that hoteliers should consider include:

- » *Will it meet regulation demands?*
- » *How does it work?*
- » *What kind of staff training is necessary?*
- » *What about operation and maintenance?*

2. WHAT IS AN EMPLOYEE SAFETY DEVICE?

To explain what an ESD is and what it is capable of performing, we can look at two factors: The device hardware provided to individual hotel employees and the staff safety solution as a whole, including hardware, infrastructure, and software.

The initiative for improving the safety of hotel staff significantly came from the industry itself, with industry professionals demanding an ESD or alert device that can instantly alert others to the exact location of an employee in distress. In principle, this means equipping each staff member with a device to activate an alarm if a threatening incident occurs. In practice, however, this also requires the development of a system that can triangulate the exact location of an alert signal and relay such information in a way that ensures an immediate response.

The safety industry replied by introducing complete safety solutions, more commonly known as hotel staff safety solutions.

Briefly stated, such advanced solutions function with each employee wearing or equipped with a distress button, which is wirelessly connected to a cloud-based software system. When an emergency situation occurs, all an employee need do is press the distress button, with the system immediately notifying relevant staff members about who needs assistance while providing them with precise real-time location details in case the employee moves to another area. Further details on how this system operates are included in section 4 of this guide.

Click button   Pinpoint alarm location   Security dispatch to that location

3. REGULATIONS

After an ongoing series of events involving abuse and sexual harassment within hotels all over US, the American hotel & lodging association (AHLA) responded in 2018 by establishing "**The 5-Star Promise**". A declaration committed to ensuring high safety standards and moral behavior by the region's leading hotel brands, more and more hotel companies are adopting the 5-Star Promise to demonstrate the priority that they place in providing a truly secure hospitality environment.

The five components of the 5-Star Promise are:

1. *Build on our industry's longstanding commitment to hospitality and a People Culture by continuing to provide industry-wide training and materials on safety and security and retain expert guidance to work with the industry on diversity and safety matters.*
2. *Ensure mandatory anti-sexual harassment policies are in place in multiple languages.*
3. *Provide ongoing training and education for employees on identifying and reporting sexual harassment.*
4. *Provide US hotel employees with employee safety devices to help them feel safe on the job.*
5. *Broaden vital partnerships with wide-ranging national organizations that target sexual violence and assault and trafficking and promote workplace safety, including the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV), End Child Prostitution and Trafficking (ECPAT-USA), and Polaris.*

Alongside this commitment by hotel chains, legislatures in several states have made these efforts mandatory. Still more cities and states are acting accordingly by enacting their own mandatory regulations. This includes providing US hotel employees with employee safety devices, which is the focus of this guide. With such efforts continuing to grow throughout the country and with AHLA's objective to provide staff safety solutions to all employees by 2020, those responsible for hotel staff safety will inevitably need to evaluate their ability to conform with heightening industry standards and requirements.

Non-US companies

While these events have unfolded within the United States, establishments in other countries should take notice as a means of anticipating changes within their own markets. This is simply because the same universal security issues exist regardless of location, such as the daily influx of new comers to a property with little to no insight on the threat level posed by individual travelers, as well as the need to balance hotel safety with guest privacy matters. As a result, while staff safety currently has the highest focus in the US, hotel companies in every other country should begin to prepare now for new regulations that will ultimately affect how their security operations should function in the relatively near future.

4. HOW IT WORKS

When considering what kind of equipment to acquire, hoteliers must examine a staff safety solution and its abilities as a whole and not make the mistake of evaluating only the device provided to individual staff members. In this section, you will be able to better understand how an advanced staff safety solution works to integrate into a hotel's operations and how it provides an infrastructure capable of always ensuring immediate assistance at the right place and time.

KEY COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE STAFF SAFETY PLATFORM

Each hotel employee is issued with either a nametag or a key fob equipped with an integrated distress button. When a hazardous situation occurs, an employee can press the button, and an alert signal is transmitted to nearby Bluetooth Low Energy (BLE) beacons.

Connected to a hotel's Wi-Fi network, each BLE beacon is located within a specific hotel room and is firmly mounted to an electrical outlet. The BLE beacon closest to the ongoing emergency will receive and relay the alert signal to the staff safety system via its Wi-Fi connection, giving rise to the name 'BluFi' for beacon devices. In a process that occurs instantaneously, the beacon reveals the exact room and floor location of the employee to staff members monitoring the system. First responders are also notified with the same details either via a dashboard alert or by text message, ensuring swift arrival times. With safety threats able to evolve and move from one location to another, a reputable staff safety platform will also update responders on the changing position of an employee in real-time. While providing responders with such vital location information, an advanced staff safety solution will still be able to maintain employee privacy by only relaying their whereabouts when a distress button is pressed.

Leading the industry in such abilities and leveraging the power of the cloud to provide staff safety operations with the efficiency and flexibility that they need is Vostio Location Solutions. Thanks to its cloud-based design, Vostio Location Solutions can be accessed fully using a web browser and is able to function independently from on-site IT equipment.

For hoteliers overseeing multiple properties, this means that staff safety needs can be monitored and managed from one location, while providing the ability to instantly interact with and alert on-site responders when an emergency occurs.

A cloud-based staff safety design also provides the advantage of allowing the system to run as a service (SaaS). Significantly, for hoteliers, this means that the platform can fully operate without having to consume a property's own resources for upgrades and maintenance, and eliminates expenses related to ensuring dedicated server capacity.

With all data stored in the cloud and managed by industry professionals, hoteliers leveraging a cloud-based staff safety platform can further eliminate any risk of an external server crashing and therefore losing vital analytical information. With all data secure and available 24/7/365, hoteliers can remain fully confident in their ability to access critical log information such as actions taken after an alert is received or response times.

This ability can prove essential should an issue of legal liability arise or when a request is made by law enforcement to examine events during a specific event.

> "Thanks to its cloud-based design, **Vostio Location Solutions** can be accessed fully using a web browser and is able to function independently from on-site IT equipment. "

In the event that a hotel's internet connection ceases to function, cloud-based staff safety technology can also importantly still continue provide its potentially life-saving abilities, ensuring that hotel employee security continues to be maintained and is never at risk.

HOW AN ADVANCED STAFF SAFETY SOLUTION OPERATES:
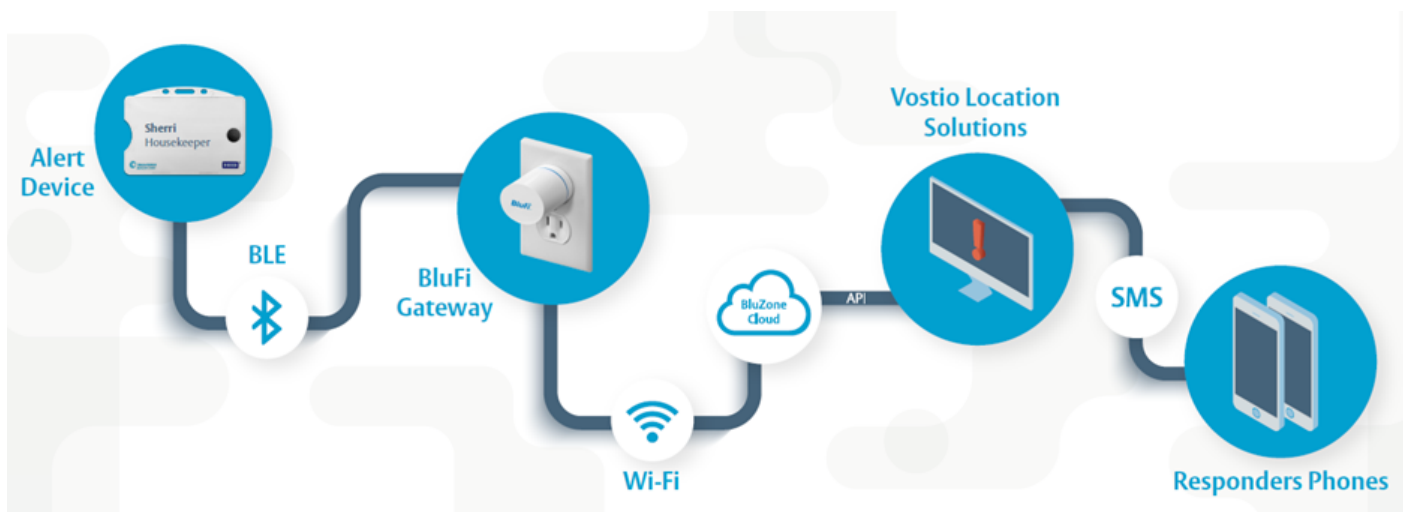
5. CORE CRITERIA

When contemplating the implementation of a staff safety solution, hoteliers should always ensure that the below main criteria are present to ensure that the correct tool for your business is identified with regard to both quality and ROI:

» *Compliance*
» *Scalability*
» *Security*
» *Future proof*
» *Ease of use*
» *Vendor quality*

Compliance

Vostio Location Solutions is specifically designed to meet both current and future demands and regulations.

Scalability

When there is a need to later expand on features and functionality, an advanced platform such as Vostio Location Solutions is able to adapt accordingly without requiring additional expensive hardware purchases or complex integrations.

In cases where the need to reduce functionality is necessary, the system also ensures that you will not have unnecessary leftovers in IT resources.

Future proof

The principle of Software as a Service (SaaS) leaves it to the vendor to prepare the solution for future technical and legal demands. A SaaS-based solution can also serve as the backbone for future IoT infrastructure needs to enhance operations and guest experiences.

Security

A staff safety solution delivered as a service from the cloud ensures updated IT-security at all times through the use of software updates and patches.

Ease of use

A staff safety solution should be easy to use and should not require extensive training for hotel staff.

Vendor Quality

Look for a global vendor, which also has the ability to offer local expertise. A reputable vendor can show proof of ownership, by putting enough resources in R&D, firmware, and adaptability according to your needs.

Take a tour of Vostio Location Solutions and its abilities by watching this video.

6. LET'S TALK ROI

Earlier, we briefly discussed why staff safety should be handled by a system and not a single set of devices. This not only has to do with how the quality of security is affected, but also determines how hoteliers can leverage the presence of a location-based platform to enhance returns on investment

User-friendly log-in, determining staff locations, cloud-based design, compliance, local backup functionality, the ability to handle staff safety remotely at several hotel facilities- All this together provides a seamless system capable of ensuring reliable operations and ultimately a safe environment for staff.

Yet with this infrastructure in place, hoteliers can vitally gain the ability to scale up to a full asset management system. Leveraging the already implemented location-based network, modules can later be added that allow hoteliers to track the exact position of amenities such as trays, trolleys, and television equipment in real-time. For example, a tray left outside a hotel room will alert the house cleaner after a given period, so he or she can remove it.

Add a geo-fencing function, and an alarm will set off if someone tries to remove a monitor from the conference room.

As material items are not subject to privacy concerns, hotels are capable of tracking amenities at all times. This translates into an effective loss prevention tool that can save hoteliers from considerable expenses in replacing lost or stolen equipment.

Further enhancing operations is the option of adding temperature, light, motion and vibration tracking abilities to monitor the performance of motorized equipment. Using machine-enabled A.I., this feature allows hoteliers to instantly determine both the condition of an asset along with the environment that the asset is situated within, with alerts automatically sent out if deviations are detected. This can lead to reduced equipment down-times, energy savings and much more.

With today's guests expecting greater personalization from their hotel stay experience, location-based technology can also be tailored to provide promotional messaging abilities to guest devices based on their real-time location. A guest near a hotel's spa or restaurant, for example, can receive a personalized promotional message that provides them with a discount to make purchases at the nearby location, enhancing feelings of satisfaction while increasing property revenues.

7. THE NEXT STEP

After considering these criteria, the next step is to ask vendors for further details on how a staff safety solution can be implemented into existing operations and ultimately, an offer to determine price. As the industry's leading provider of staff safety innovation, Vingcard stands ready to answer any further questions that you may have. Click the link below to get in touch with one of our industry experts and learn more about how location-based technology can provide you with a safer, more efficient and profitable hotel business.

Get in touch