

Four ways B&B and guest house owners can avoid being exposed this festive season

By [Paul Halley](#) 2 Dec 2016

With the hospitality industry at its busiest during the holiday period, it is also at its most vulnerable. Here are some of the common risks owners face and how best to mitigate them.



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1. Make sure even Santa can't get in...

With a few weeks left before the holiday rush, now is an ideal time to check all safety and security installations such as alarm systems, perimeter fencing, fire equipment and safety evacuation procedures. Staff should be receiving refresher training so they are well prepared to respond to emergencies such as security threats, fires, floods, guest injuries, etc.

Guests should also be provided with general safety tips and made aware of the establishment's safety and evacuation procedures on arrival. Guests should be urged to report incidents such as credit card fraud, the suspicious behaviour of on-site contractors (or even staff) and should be encouraged to keep their valuables locked up. Any incidents resulting in possible injuries also need to be recorded in detail.

2. Keeping afloat

The country is expected to continue experiencing sporadic, heavy rains over the coming months, and while this is a welcomed relief, the disastrous effects of lightning and floods are already evident. To help limit potential damage, holiday establishments should ensure that:

- ✓ Electronic equipment has surge protection installed
- ✓ Lightning conductors (if installed) where there are thatched roofs, are serviced
- ✓ Gutters, drains and storm water run-off drainage are unblocked
- ✓ All roofs are checked and any leaks repaired

On the flipside, until dam levels reach more acceptable levels, water restrictions, and even outages will persist. The challenge here is flooding due to geyser or pipe bursts from the pressure fluctuations or taps

being left open during water outages hence, establishments should ensure that:

- ✓ Geyser overflow systems are in working order
- ✓ All geysers have drip trays
- ✓ Geyser valves regulate or switch off water supply
- ✓ Guests are advised to check taps before leaving their rooms
- ✓ Housekeeping staff check and close all taps during a water outage
- ✓ Hand held fire extinguishers and fire blankets are placed in, or within close proximity, to every room – should a fire break out during an outage

3. Early morning blues

To deal with the volumes of guests, kitchens often close later with staff leaving in the early hours of the morning. At this point, they are usually very tired and may neglect to check that deep fat fryers, stoves, and cooking equipment are switched off, that freezers are operating normally and that the premises are secure and alarm system activated. Not only is there a danger of frozen goods spoiling but the establishment also runs the risk of fire damage. Implementing and requiring strict adherence to a robust shut-down procedure becomes critical; requiring additional checks and a review of the shutdown process is, therefore, also advisable.

4. Business uninterrupted

These checks and balances are invaluable in managing risks, however, cannot completely shield businesses from losses. The cost of potential liability claims (there is always that one guest who has too much festive cheer and gets injured), flood damage or even loss of income - coupled with costs of rehousing guests - if an establishment isn't able to operate for a certain period, can be exorbitant. As the ultimate safeguard, comprehensive hospitality insurance and business interruption covers should form part of every service provider's risk management strategy.

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