

Answers to Solve the Crisis

No.1 Hotel Ablaze

The Scenario

You are the MD of a large tour operator based in Scotland. You have a coach group who are travelling on a "Highlights of Europe" coach tour. The tour takes 14 days, with a first and last night in London. It is the first night, and the group has arrived in London at the Golden Oasis Hotel, an 80 room 3 star property in the Holborn district of London. They have subsequently spent the evening watching *The Sound of Music* in the West End, before returning to the hotel. Your tour leader Angela McDermott accompanied the group to the theatre.

At 2:15am, fire appliances arrive at the hotel after smoke and flames were seen coming from a 5th storey window. The hotel alarm was triggered at 2:07am, and the evacuation procedure was implemented. As the MD of the company, you are informed of the incident at 2:20am by your operations manager, who is on the out of hours duty rota this week and was called by the hotel staff. John Sweeney, one of the party, has not appeared at the muster point in front of the Hotel. He is known to have been drinking in the hotel bar till around 1am. Hotel staff were unable to reach the upper levels of the building because of smoke.

What would your actions be in the first hour after you are notified? What information would you need to obtain? What would your primary concerns be at this time?

Write your comments by clicking the link below. You may also write comments on other people's responses. You can leave an answer anonymously if you wish. All submissions will be reviewed by docleaf before posting, and no material of a defamatory or inappropriate nature will be posted on the page.

What would your actions be in the first hour after you are notified?

- 1. In conjunction with my operations manager, try and make contact with Angela, as it was a member of hotel staff who called the emergency mobile and not Angela herself.*
- 2. Confirm all members of the group are accounted for, excluding Mr Sweeney.*
- 3. Find out if Mr Sweeney has been located since the notification call was made.*
- 4. Ensure all other group members are somewhere safe and warm and are being looked after, with food and drinks.*
- 5. Ensure emergency services have been notified of the missing party member and have been given our emergency number and that of Angela in case further information is required, or they need to give us information.*
- 6. Notify the local police that Mr Sweeney is missing if this is still the case.*

What information would you need to obtain?

- 1. Where was Mr Sweeney last seen and by whom? It could have been after he was seen in the bar at 1am. Pass this information on to the emergency services.*
- 2. Get Mr Sweeney's booking information as it may have a mobile phone number that he can be contacted on. This will also provide us with next of kin details that we can pass on to the police.*

What would your primary concerns be at this time?

- 1. Ensuring that all other group members are somewhere safe and warm and being looked after.*
- 2. Obtaining as much information as possible that would be useful to the emergency services.*
- 3. Making contact with Angela.*

Heather Fittell. 30/8/07

*I would phone Angela for the clients mobile phone number to find out where he was. I would instruct her to tell the fire brigade about the missing client and find out which room he was booked into and to advise the fire brigade that he had been in the bar prior to the fire. They could then check the route between the bar and his room. This way no time would be lost. Angela would speak to the other members of his group to find out if they knew where he had gone after the bar. If the client was not contactable by phone I would call out my office team and head into the office in order to have all communications available and a team to read a statement in response to any media and client enquires. I would advise the owner of the company what had happened and instigate our emergency procedure for this situation. **29/8/07***

*I would instruct my operations manager to check with hotel staff on duty at the time where and when Mr. Sweeney was last seen. I would not expect to have to fly to the scene myself immediately, provided I had confidence in the operations manager on the spot. Once a very thorough check had been made with emergency services and other guests, then I would arrange for the next of kin to be notified that Mr. Sweeney was missing. It is important to be open with the family at the outset, once all sensible checks have been made. **Jose Penrose 29/8/07***

*The first thing is to make sure it is known he is missing and send the fire crew to his room if this possible. I'd then want to know as many facts as possible - what caused the fire? how many others are missing? how bad was the fire? have all rooms been checked? Where may Mr Sweeney have gone? I would decide based on some of the above whether to call in a team to handle this and would inform the duty PR. Start looking into flights to London and make a call on whether I needed to be there. We'd need to pull out his file and make a call as to whether to notify next of kin. If he had been drinking, there is every chance he's gone out on the town or is sleeping through the alarm, but we can't be sure of this. **29/8/07***

*I would make sure the fire service know about the missing person and what room he was in. I would also want to get ready for the media attention that the company would get if this person has died. Sadly, my staff have no emergency process so I probably wouldn't get hold of them until they got to work in the morning - so I would be flying alone on this one... **Ian Stuart, London. 28/8/07***

*I would of course be concerned about the welfare of the missing Mr. Sweeney. I would ask my Operations Manager to update me when he had something to report. **28/8/07***

*We are a tour operator and have been trading for 25 years and have never had a crisis - we are very experienced. As regard to this scenario i would call my management team into the office and tell them to get on with it - after all that's what they are paid for. **28/8/07***

*The most sensible thing to do would be to inform the emergency services people that Mr Sweeney is in the hotel somewhere, providing he made it back to his own room! You'd probably have to find out from the hotel staff where his room is. Did he actually go back to his room? Did he go out on the town? I was in a Hotel in Glasgow recently when the fire alarm went off at 1:00am and the fire brigade were downstairs very quickly. It was a bit chaotic, even when it turned out that there was no fire. I could still see some people looking out of the window of their hotel rooms. The presence of the fire brigade didn't seem to bother them. Some people just won't cooperate, even when their lives might be at risk! **Simon Decker 28/8/07***
