



Hotel Employees Safety Protections Ordinance Fact Sheet

Translated version of this document is available upon request at: (206) 256-5297.

Seattle's Hotel Employees Safety Protections Ordinance requires covered employers to protect employees from guest conduct that is “violent or harassing,” which is defined as assault, harassment, nonconsensual sexual contact, and indecent exposure.

Which employees are protected by this law?

Hourly employees that work at a Seattle hotel or motel of 60 or more rooms or at an ancillary hotel business are protected by this law, regardless of immigration status.

The following employers must follow this law:

1) Employers that own, control, or operate a Seattle hotel or motel with 60 or more guest rooms; 2) Businesses that routinely contract with a hotel to provide services in conjunction with the hotel's purpose; 3) Businesses that lease or sublease space at the site of the hotel to provide services in conjunction with the hotel's purpose and 4) businesses that provide food and beverages to hotel guests and to the public where the business has an entrance within the hotel premises.

Right to panic buttons

A panic button is an “emergency contact device” that is designed to be easily carried by an employee and that will summon immediate on-scene help from another employee, security guard, or representative of the hotel employer.

Employers must provide panic buttons to employees that work or provide services to guest rooms, as well as to ancillary hotel business employees that are working in or providing services.

What types of panic buttons meet the law's requirements? The panic button must be designed to be carried by the user and simple to activate without delays caused by entering passwords, waiting for the system to turn on, or requiring a user to hold down a button to sustain a signal.

What must a hotel employer do when a panic button is activated? An employer must immediately send a security guard, another employee, or a hotel representative, to help the employee. An employer cannot

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discipline or take adverse action against an employee for using the panic button to call for help. The employee must be allowed to use the panic button and stop working to escape danger and wait for help.

To prevent violent or harassing conduct an employer must:

- Have policies and practices that prevent and address violent or harassing conduct by guests.
- Inform guests of its policy prior to or at the time of guest check-in and through other means for special circumstances. Hotel employers must post a sign on the back of every guest room door that notifies guests of this law. The sign must include; 1) a header which states, "The law protects hotel housekeepers and other employees from violent assault and sexual harassment;" 2) a citation to Seattle Municipal Code 14.26; and 3) notice that the hotel provides panic buttons to employees who are assigned to work in guest rooms.
- Take the steps that are needed to safeguard employees from any future violent or harassing conduct by the guest. An employer cannot assign employees to work in that guest room or make deliveries in this situation, except in the narrow case of conducting a safety check.

What information must be given to an employee who is a survivor of alleged violent or harassing guest conduct? An employer must provide the employee with a copy of the notice that was provided to the accused guest about minimum steps taken and a copy of the Notice of Community Advocate and Crime Victim Rights for Employees. This Notice provides the contact information for King County Sexual Assault Resource Center ([KCSARC](#)), a community based, victim's advocacy organization with a 24-hour hotline that the employee can call to receive support and resources. KCSARC's confidential services can be reached by dialing: 1-888-99-VOICE (1 (888) 998-6423).

What protections are afforded to an employee that is the survivor of alleged violent or harassing guest conduct? The employee is entitled to the following:

- At the employee's request and/or consent, reassignment to an equivalent or better assignment away from the guest during their stay;
- Up to 16 hours of paid time to be used within the 14 days following a report so that the employee can work with law enforcement and can consult with a counselor, advisor, advocate, or support person; and
- The employer's cooperation in any law enforcement investigation into the incident.

What notice does an employee have to give to take the 16 hours of paid leave?

An employer may require an employee to give reasonable notice of an absence from work for a use of paid leave authorized by this law. These policies cannot interfere with an employee's lawful use of paid leave.

Notice And Posting Requirements of this Law

Employers must display one of two notice of rights posters containing the information that employers must post to comply with the notice and posting requirements of all [four hotel employee protection laws](#). The [Notice of Rights for Hotel Employees](#) posters is for employees of hotels and the [Notice of Rights for Employees of Ancillary Hotel Businesses](#) is for employees of ancillary hotel businesses.

The Seattle Office of Labor Standards is here to help:

Visit seattle.gov/laborstandards

Email laborstandards@seattle.gov to request a training.

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The information provided in this document is not intended to be legal advice. The reader should not use this as a substitute for laws and regulations. For more detailed information about this law, please visit the Hotel Employees Safety Protections webpage on the (OLS) Office of Labor Standards website.