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Changes in U.S Hotel Safety and Security Staffing and Procedures during 2001 and 2002

by Cathy A. Enz, Ph.D.



The Center for Hospitality Research
AT THE SCHOOL OF HOTEL ADMINISTRATION

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Surveys of hotel general managers conducted in 2001 and in 2002 found some but not many hotels making changes in their safety and security arrangements. When asked to respond on a five-point scale whether they were doing nothing (1) or much (5) managers generally answered in the middle, indicating that they were making some changes, either by adding security staff or updating security policies. On balance, the hotels made more changes in 2002 than in 2001.

When the sample was broken down into segments, the study found that extended-stay hotels reported the greatest change in safety and security procedures, while luxury hotels were most likely to add security staff, followed by extended-stay properties.

Examining the hotels by their geographic location revealed little differences in the plans to add security employees, but certain areas stood out with regard to making changes in safety and security procedures. Hotels in the west-south-central region (including Oklahoma and Texas) were most likely to make procedural changes, followed by those in the populous middle-Atlantic region (New Jersey and New York) and the east-north-central region (Illinois and Michigan).

One factor that is undoubtedly influencing the findings is the probability that many hotels already had effective safety and security systems in place before the September 11 attacks.

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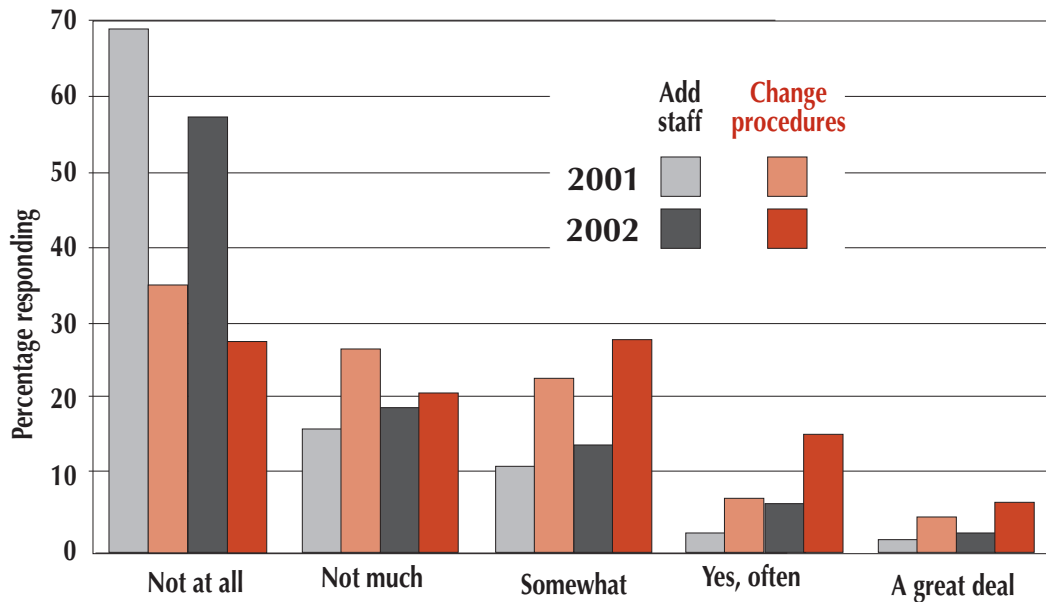
THE DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WEBSITE, www.ready.gov, tells visitors that the threat of terrorist attack, either by biological, chemical, nuclear, or radiological weapons is genuine. The site goes on to advise Americans to become better prepared for any eventuality. This message of readiness applies to organizations as well as individuals, and particularly to those businesses such as hotels that have been identified as potential targets.

In light of the continuing concern regarding terrorism in the United States, this report examines the following question: what changes are hotel general managers making to their safety and security activities? To explore changes in hotels' security procedures and staffing, The Center for Hospitality Research conducted a study of general managers' activities in the weeks following September 11, 2001, and issued a report detailing the changes being made in the wake of the terrorist attacks. A similar study was made one year later, in Septem-

ber 2002.¹ Both studies investigated the degree to which hotels added staff to their safety and security groups and to which they had changed their security procedures.²

¹ A questionnaire faxed to a stratified random sample of general managers across the United States in October 2001 yielded a response of 1,033. Sent again in September 2002, the questionnaire drew 492 responses.

² For a discussion of the 2001 study findings regarding GMs' attitudes and actions, see: Masako S. Taylor and Cathy A. Enz, "Voices from the Field," *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 1 (February 2002), pp. 7-20.

EXHIBIT 1**Percentage of general managers reporting changes in security staffing or procedures in 2001 and 2002**

Note: 2001 $N = 1,033$; 2002 $N = 492$. Managers responded using a Likert-type scale on which 1 = not at all and 5 = a great deal.

In contrast to media reports that hotels had enhanced their safety and security measures, our own study revealed a modest effort to alter procedures and increase staff (see Exhibit 1). Between October 2001 and September 2002 the effort to change procedures and increase safety staff expanded, with an increased number of managers reporting that they changed their procedures and hired key personnel. Nevertheless, in the 2002 study almost 30 percent of the general managers surveyed had done nothing to alter their security procedures, and over 50 percent had not added security employees. While

this finding may be disturbing on the surface, further examination may well show that many hotels already had reasonably complete security procedures in place.

Overall, the results shown in Exhibit 1 revealed that GMs were not doing a great deal of reevaluation of their security procedures (only 20.8 percent indicated they had done a little), and even fewer were substantially changing their procedures (only 6.6 percent reported making a great deal of change). When it came to adding employees, 58 percent reported making no additions to their security staff—in contrast to about 70

percent in the 2001 study. Clearly, these findings show that some additional personnel are being hired in 2002 to help secure hotel properties.

Segment Analysis

While the overall picture would suggest that more effort was devoted to rethinking safety and security in 2002 than was evident right after September 11, some hotels reported making more changes than others, as shown in Exhibits 2 and 3 (on page 7).

More hotels made changes in security arrangements in 2002 than did so in 2001, but the percentage of hotels making changes is still relatively small.

For example, luxury hotels and extended-stay hotels reported the highest levels of change in procedures during 2002. Extended-stay hotels in particular were slow to react in 2001, as evidenced by their low scores relative to other types of hotels, but they made the most dramatic changes during 2002. Luxury and upscale hotels were most likely to report adding safety staff, followed by extended-stay hotels. In all cases, only modest levels of change were reported, with the average score for changing procedures being 2.19 in 2001 and 2.51 in 2002 (using a scale ranging from 1, not at all, to 5, a great deal). Mean scores for adding to the security staff were even lower than for changing procedures. On a similar

five-point scale, the mean score was 1.51 in the 2001 survey and 1.74 in 2002. These overall mean scores do show that more hotels reported making changes in 2002, but again the degree of change was modest. Luxury hotels repeatedly showed a pattern of greater awareness and attention to safety and security, and extended-stay hotels went from making the fewest changes in staff and procedures to making the most procedural changes, and to being one of the top-three segments in the case of increased staffing.

Again, what these findings do not reveal is that it is possible that many hotels already had investments in well-developed safety and security procedures and so do not need to make substantial changes.

Regional Analysis

A final analysis explored the degree to which hotels in various regions of the United States altered their safety and security policies and staffing levels. It was expected that managers at hotels in areas with large population densities might consider their properties to be more-likely targets of terrorism than would those in rural areas. If that were true, one would anticipate seeing dramatic changes in hotel-safety arrangements. This speculation was not fully supported, as the results in Exhibits 4 and 5 reveal (page 8). The largest changes to both security procedures and personnel were reported by hotels in the nation's west-south-central region, which includes the states of Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas,

EXHIBIT 2
Reported changes in security procedures by segment for 2001 and 2002

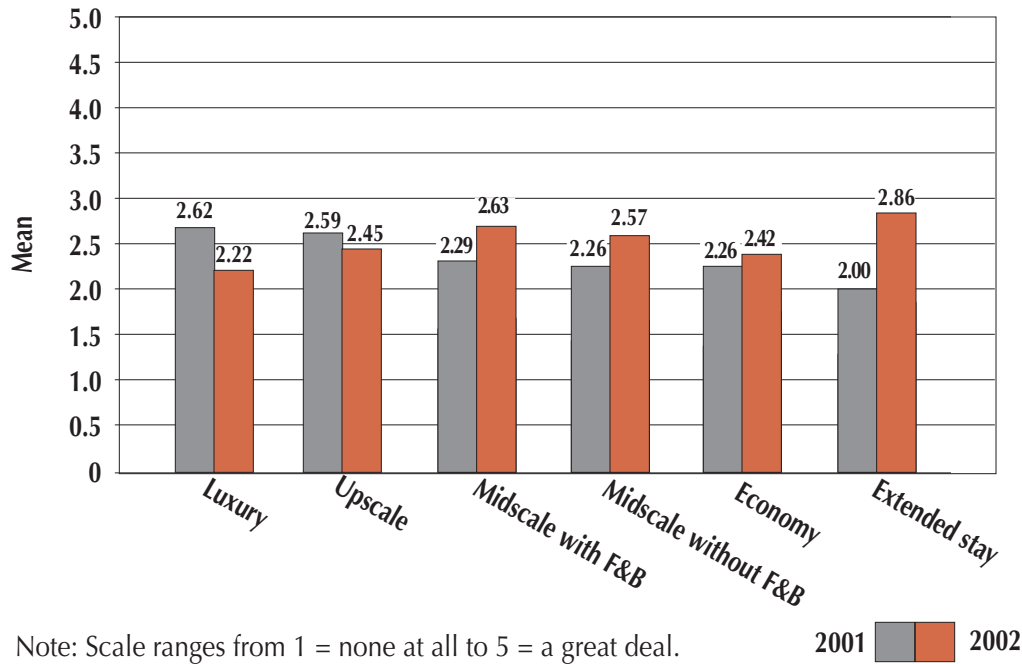


EXHIBIT 3
Reported changes in security staffing by segment for 2001 and 2002

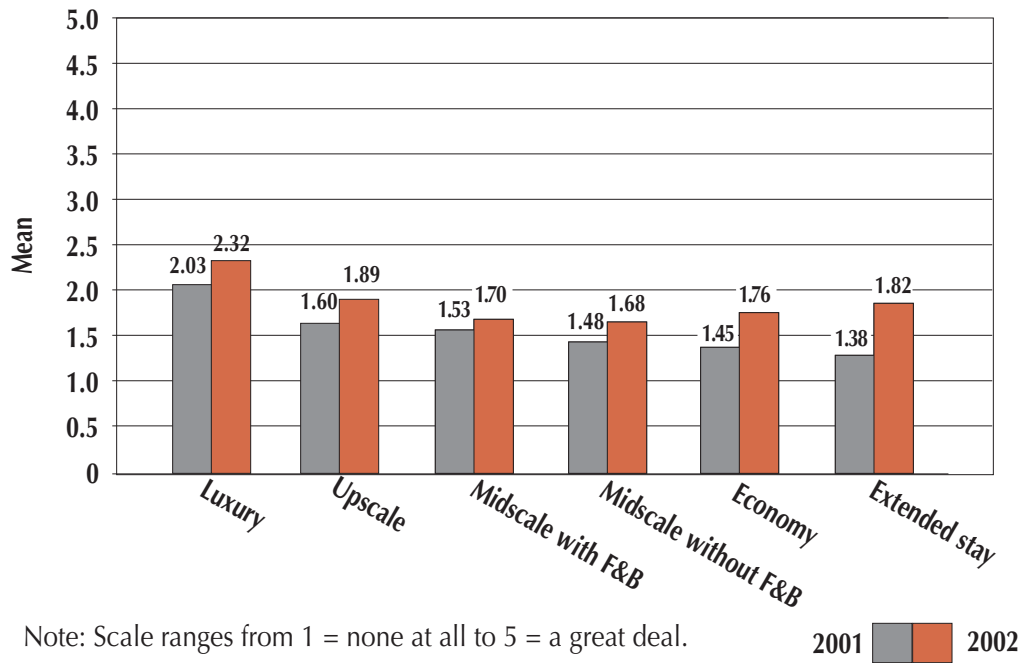
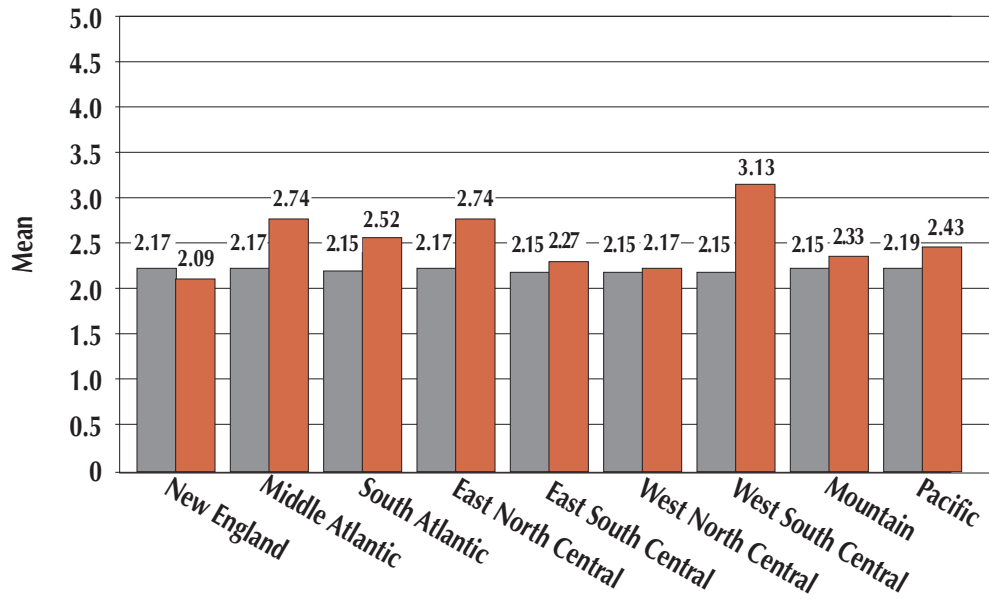
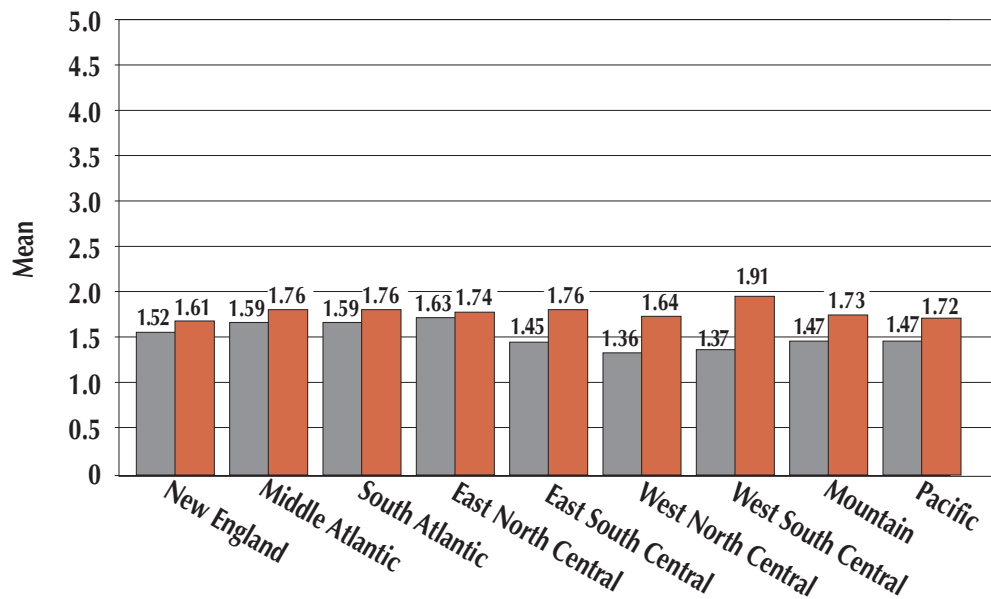


EXHIBIT 4**Reported changes in security procedures by region for 2001 and 2002**

Note: Scale ranges from 1 = none at all to 5 = a great deal.

2001 2002

EXHIBIT 5**Reported changes in security staffing by region for 2001 and 2002**

Note: Scale ranges from 1 = none at all to 5 = a great deal.

2001 2002

and Louisiana. Certainly those states have metropolitan areas of considerable size, but they also have wide rural spaces—a fact that does not support the speculative hypothesis. In contrast, another region with notable changes was the middle-Atlantic region, which consists of populous New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. Changes to safety procedures in this region of the country are consistent with the assumption regarding increased caution in major metropolitan areas. The study also found that safety employees were added by hotels in the south-Atlantic region (which includes Maryland), and security procedures were changed somewhat in the east-north-central region, which includes both Illinois and Michigan. Even so, overall regional differences were not notable, and hotels in most regions reported similar levels of change.

A previous CHR study examined the safety and security equipment in hotels and revealed that luxury and upscale hotels, airport and urban hotels, large properties, and new hotels are most likely to maintain a high level of safety and security amenities.³ The results of that study should be comforting to the traveling public, since so many hotels have equipped their physical facilities with essential safety and security features—even

³ Cathy A. Enz and Masako S. Taylor, “The Safety and Security of U.S. Hotels: A Post-September 11 Report” (CHR Report), Cornell University Center for Hospitality Research, 2002 (www.chr.cornell.edu).

though many of those features are not required by any building code.

Safety and security equipment is, however, useful only to the extent that a hotel also has complete plans for its use, maintenance, and upgrade. By exploring the degree to which general managers have changed their procedures or added staff, this study helps to address the question of changes in implementation. The results show that few hotels have made much reconsideration of their existing security procedures or enhanced their safety personnel.

We note, however, that the hotels that scored the highest in changing their policies and staffing (i.e., luxury hotels), were also hotels that earned high scores on our study of physical features. This may suggest that managers whose hotels are not well equipped may not be in a position to alter or upgrade their emergency plans.

Americans are paying special attention to their security when traveling since the terrorist attacks and the war with Iraq. Likewise, many sectors of the hotel industry are also giving greater scrutiny to safety. Nevertheless, while some operators are reviewing policies and procedures, others may be reluctant to disturb their existing protocols either because of the risk of destroying their property’s ambience or because their current procedures and staffing levels are adequate. For all hoteliers, the challenge lies in making careful choices that provide appropriate standards for safety. ■

About the Author



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