

Major hotels giving panic buttons to staff nationwide

A sign of the #MeToo movement

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
Associated Press

Tens of thousands of employees at more than 18,000 U.S. hotels will soon carry panic buttons to help protect them from harassment and assault in an era of heightened awareness around the #MeToo movement.

More than a dozen big hotel chains — including Marriott, Hilton, Hyatt, IHG and Wyndham — said that they will provide personal safety devices by 2020 to all employees who deal one-on-one with guests. The companies will also train staff to identify and report harassment and publish anti-sexual harassment policies in multiple languages.

The devices will vary by hotel. In a new, Wi-Fi enabled hotel, for example, companies may give out devices that automatically send the employee’s location to security officers. In an older or smaller hotel, they might distribute devices that emit a loud shriek.

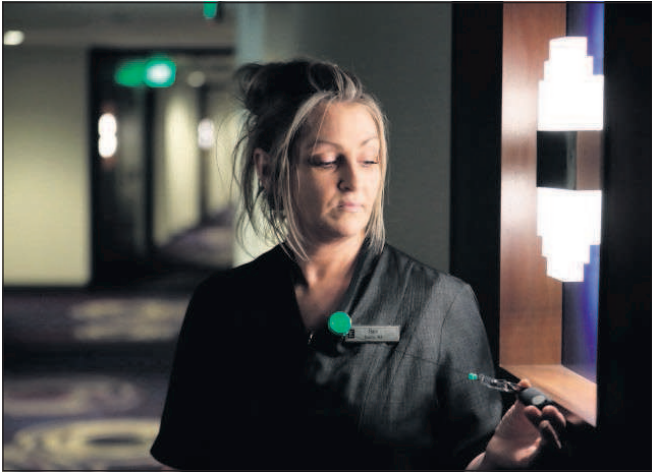
The American Hotel and Lodging Association, which is backing the effort, says around three-fourths of its 25,000 member hotels are participating right now. It is working with harassment and human trafficking organizations to develop training and testing devices to help hotels figure out what works best.

This isn’t the first time hotels are giving panic buttons to staff. New York has required them since 2012, after a hotel maid there accused French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn of sexually assaulting her in his suite. Chicago and Seattle began requiring them



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Rani Accettola, a housekeeper at the Embassy Suites by Hilton hotel in Seattle’s Pioneer Square neighborhood, poses for a photo while holding a device that lets her push a button and summon help if she is in a threatening situation while working.



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Rani Accettola, a housekeeper, is among hotel workers across the nation who have panic buttons.

more recently.

But increasing public discussion about harassment and the #MeToo movement has given the effort a new sense of urgency. Red Roof Inn, Best Western, AccorHotels, Four Seasons and Caesar’s are other

participants in the rare display of unity from a fiercely competitive industry.

“The cultural conversations have changed, and we have gotten smarter,” said Erika Alexander, Marriott’s chief lodging officer for the Amer-

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icas. Marriott plans to make the devices standard at all of its nearly 5,000 hotels in North America by 2020. Eventually it hopes to expand the devices globally.

Rani Accettola, a housekeeper at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Seattle’s Pioneer Square, has a safety fob clipped to the front of her uniform at all times. If she presses a button, hotel managers and security are immediately notified of her location. Accettola said the system gives her an added feeling of security, especially when she works late.

“At any moment, help is there if you should need it,” she said.

It’s unclear how often the devices will be used, but harassment of hotel staff is an ongoing issue. In a 2016 survey of 500 housekeepers in Chicago, 49 percent said guests had flashed them, exposed themselves or opened the door naked.

The rollout of the devices will be messy. Hotel companies only manage some of their properties; others are managed by franchisees. Some companies may require franchisees

to add the devices; others may not. Properties vary widely, from sprawling 2,500-room resorts to 65-room, cookie-cutter hotels by the highway.

Some hotels have already begun the process. Hyatt mandated electronic safety devices last fall and has already distributed them to 4,500 employees at 120 hotels in the Americas, Hyatt CEO Mark Hoplamazian said. Hyatt has also strongly recommended the devices for franchisees, and expects to expand the program globally, Hoplamazian said.

He said the cost of the devices is easily absorbed by the company. Shrieking alarms — the kind most widely used at Hyatt right now — cost around \$25 each. A React mobile device, like the one Accettola wears, retails for \$70, but big hotel chains will likely be able to get bulk discounts.

Hoplamazian said there haven’t been many reported usages. In one instance, a guest was acting strangely so a housekeeper summoned help. It turned out there was no threat, but Hoplamazian is glad the system worked.

“While the frequency may not be high, the importance of it is really, really high,” he said.

Wyndham CEO Geoff Ballotti said his company expects to distribute safety devices by the end of next year to 5,000 employees in the 450 U.S. hotels it owns and manages. Hilton CEO Chris Nassetta said “tens of thousands” of staff at 4,500 hotels will get the devices by 2020.

Nassetta said the rollout will take time because training staff members how to respond to the devices is as important as the devices themselves.

“We don’t want to create the appearance of safety without the reality behind it,” he said.

COMMUNITY NOTES

Continued from Page 1B

Line Dancing — 5:30 to 8 p.m., Seaside American Legion, 1315 Broadway. For information, call 503-738-5111. There is no cost; suggested \$5 tip to the instructor.

MONDAY

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Scandinavian Workshop — 10 a.m., First Lutheran Church, 725 33rd St. Needlework, hardanger, knitting, crocheting, embroidery and quilting. All are welcome. For information, call 503-325-1364 or 503-325-7960.

Astoria High School Class of 1970 — 11 a.m., Koffee Klatch at Rod’s Bar and Grill, 45 N.E. Skipanon Drive, Warrenton. For information, call ShawnAnn Hope at 503-791-1231.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation \$3 for those older than 60; \$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. Cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Warrenton Senior Lunch Program — noon, Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. Suggested donation of \$5 for seniors and \$7 for those younger than 60. For information, or to volunteer, call 503-861-3502 Monday or Thursday.

Astoria Rotary Club — noon, second floor of the Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St. Guests always welcome. For information, go to AstoriaRotary.org

Parkinson’s Support Group — 1 p.m., Peace Lutheran Church library, 565 12th St. For information, call 503-440-1970 or 503-440-1985.

Peninsula Quilt Guild — 1 p.m., Peninsula Church Center, 5000 N Place, Seaview, Washington. Newcomers welcome. Bring nonperishable food donation. For information, call Janet King at 360-665-3005.

Knochlers Pinochle Group — 1 p.m., Bob Chisholm Community

Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Cost is \$1 per regular session per person. Players with highest and second highest scores split the prize. Game is designed for players 55 and older, but all ages are welcome.

Mahjong for Experienced Players — 1 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Line Dancing for Seniors — 3 to 4:30 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. Not for beginners. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Seaside Lions Club — 5 p.m., West Lake Restaurant & Lounge, 1480 S. Roosevelt Drive, Seaside. For information, call 503-738-7693.

Pacific County (Wash.) Democrats — 7 p.m., South County Building, 7013 Sandridge Road in Long Beach, Washington. For information, go to pacificcountydemocrats.com

TUESDAY

Tobacco Free Coalition of Clatsop County — 9 to 10:30 a.m., Clatsop County Health and Human Services, 820 Exchange St. Anyone interested in tobacco use prevention and education welcome. For information, call Steven Blakesley at 503-325-8500 or Alissa Dorman at 503-325-4321, ext. 5758.

Do Nothing Club — 10 a.m. to noon, 24002 U St., Ocean Park, Washington. Men’s group. For information, call Jack McBride at 360-665-2721.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation of \$3 for those older than 60; \$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. The cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Astoria Lions Club — noon, Astoria Elks Lodge, 453 11th St. Prospective members welcome. For information, contact Charlene Larsen at 503-325-0590.

Astoria-Warrenton Duplicate Bridge Club — 12:30 to 4 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange

St. Anyone may play if they have a partner; to request a bridge partner, call 503-325-0029.

Warrenton Alzheimer’s Support Group — 2 to 3:30 p.m., 2002 S.E. Chokeberry Ave., Warrenton. Support and information about Alzheimer’s disease. For information, call Grace Bruseth 503-738-6412.

Authentic Spiritual Conversations — 7 to 8:30 p.m., Activity Center, first floor, CMH-OHSU Knight Cancer Collaborative, 1905 Exchange St. Open dialogue about spiritual issues. All faiths, including “spiritual but not religious” welcome. For information, email info@cgifellowship.org or call 916-307-9790.

WEDNESDAY

Warrenton Sunrise Rotary Club — 7 a.m., Dooger’s Seafood & Grill, Youngs Bay Plaza, 103 S. U.S. Highway 101, Warrenton. For information, call 503-325-4030.

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Warrenton Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) — Kickoff meeting, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., 88786 Dellmoor Loop, Warrenton. Moms of children from infants through kindergarteners are welcome. Free breakfast and child care provided. For information, go to mops.org/groups/warrentonmops

Help Ending Abusive Relationship Tendencies — 10 to 11:30 a.m., The Harbor, 1361 Duane St. HEART covers subjects related to the effects of domestic violence on children, parents and other family members. Open group for females, those who identify as female, anyone in an abusive relationship, or who knows someone who is. For information, call Juli Hol at 503-325-3426, ext. 103.

Wickiup Senior Lunches — 11:30 a.m., Wickiup Grange Hall, 92683 Svensen Market Road. Free for those older than 60 (\$3 suggested donation), \$6.75 for those younger than age 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation of \$3 for those older than 60;

\$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. The cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Blood Pressure Checks — noon to 2 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Warrenton Kiwanis Club — 1 p.m., Dooger’s Seafood and Grill, 103 U.S. Highway 101, Warrenton. For information, call Darlene Warren at 503-861-2672.

Sit & Stitch — 1 to 3 p.m., Homespun Quilts & Yarn, 108 10th St. Bring knitting, crochet or other needlework projects along to this community stitching time. All skill levels welcome.

Mahjong for Experienced Players — 1:15 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Beginner Line Dancing for Seniors — 1:30 to 3 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Warrenton Business Association — 5:30 p.m., commission chambers, Warrenton City Hall, 225 S. Main Ave. For information, call Kristin Talamantez at 503-861-9750.

Fat Quarter Quilters — 5:30 to 8 p.m., Homespun Quilts, 108 10th St. Not limited to quilts. For information, call 503-325-3300 or 800-298-3177 or go to homespunquilt.com

LGBTIQ Group — 6 p.m., Astoria Armory, 1636 Exchange St. Group is designed to help connect LGBTIQ people in Clatsop, Columbia, Tillamook and Pacific counties to discuss LGBTIQ issues freely and confidentially. For questions, contact Chris Wright at 425-314-3388.

Seaport Masonic Lodge No. 7 — 6:30 p.m. dinner, 7:30 p.m. meeting, 1572 Franklin Ave. All Masons and their guests are welcome.

THURSDAY

Chair Exercises for Seniors — 9 to 9:45 a.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. For information, call 503-325-3231.

Wickiup Senior Lunches — 11:30 a.m., Wickiup Grange Hall, 92683 Svensen Market Road. Free for those older than 60 (\$3 suggested donation), \$6.75 for those younger than age 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation of \$3 for those older than 60; \$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. The cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Warrenton Senior Lunch Program — noon, Warrenton Community Center, 170 S.W. Third St. Suggested donation of \$5 for seniors and \$7 for those younger than 60. For information, or to volunteer, call 503-861-3502 Monday or Thursday.

Seaside Rotary Club — noon, Outlet Mall, 1111 N. Roosevelt Drive, No. 206, Seaside. Lunch costs \$15. All are welcome. For information, go to seasiderotary.com

Survivors Circle — noon to 1 p.m., The Harbor, 1361 Duane St. Trauma Recovery and Empowerment Model Peer Support Group for survivors of intimate partner and sexual assault. For information, contact Shannon Symonds at 503-325-3426 ext. 106.

Astoria-Warrenton Duplicate Bridge Club — 12:30 to 4 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. Anyone may play if they have a partner; to request a bridge partner, call 503-325-0029.

Lower Columbia Chief Petty Officers Association — 1 p.m., Clatsop Post 12 American Legion, 1132 Exchange St. The club accepts all enlisted prior, retired and active military personnel, rank E7 and above. For information, call Lauren Walton 208-290-8110.

Trivia — 6:30 p.m., Uptown Cafe, 1639 S.E. Ensign Lane, Warrenton. Teams of up to four players. Three \$2 games, winners take each pot. Rolling jackpot builds from week to week if no one answers jackpot question. For information, call 503-861-5639.

Jam Session — 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., Astoria Senior Center, 1111 Exchange St. Open to the public. For information, call 503-325-3231.

FRIDAY

AAUW Walking Group — 9:30 a.m. Seaside Branch of American Association of University Women weekly low-impact group walk, followed by coffee and fellowship. For information, call 503-738-7751.

Senior Lunch — 11:30 a.m., Bob Chisholm Senior Center, 1225 Avenue A, Seaside. Suggested donation of \$3 for those older than 60; \$6.75 for those younger than 60. For information, call Suzanne Bjaranson at 503-861-4202.

Columbia Senior Diners — 11:30 a.m., 1111 Exchange St. The cost is \$6. For information, or to have a meal delivered, call 503-325-9693.

Better Breathers Club — 1:30 to 3 p.m., Providence Seaside Hospital, Suite 113 (lower level), 725 S. Wahanna Road. Sessions offer support, ways and techniques to cope with COPD, asthma, pulmonary fibrosis and other respiratory issues. Caregivers also welcome. No cost, but registration encouraged by calling 800-562-8964.

Community Skate Night — 5 to 9 p.m., Astoria Armory, 1650 Exchange St. Admission \$3. Limited roller skate rentals available for \$3; roller blades available. For information, call 503-738-6064 or go to astoriaarmory.com

OTHER

Quilting Project Needs Fabric — Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church, Seaside. Needs polyester/cotton fabric, 1/2 yard or larger, and clean sheets (queen or king size) for group that makes quilts for those in need within the U.S. and around the world. For information, or to donate, call Claudia Kulland at 503-738-5895.

Blankets Needed — Columbia Veterinary Hospital, 576 31st St. Needs blanket donations for their four legged patients. Anything is helpful, even the stained or frayed. Donations can be dropped off during business hours (closed for lunch from noon to 1:30 p.m.) Monday through Saturday.