

Accor Fights Energy Waste

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Accor North America has been very aggressive in its energy management efforts in recent years. The brand company that includes Motel 6, Studio 6 and Novotel is experimenting with some new systems that show promise for substantial savings without guest inconvenience.

Currently under test in four properties (two Motel 6s, a Studio 6 and a Novotel) is a wireless, web-based system that controls guestroom HVAC units at all the properties from one central location.

According to Renee Swoger, Accor North America's director of quality and environment, early results are promising. "We've seen a 25-percent reduction in PTAC run-time in those rooms with the system," she says. "And to make the comparisons more accurate, we compare a room with the system against one adjoining that doesn't have it."

The system also allows the corporate staff to send messages or initiate surveys directly to the room thermostats.

Swoger says her staff is still evaluating how such a system would work on a chainwide basis, given regional variations in climate (The test units are in dissimilar weather locations: Chicago, Orland, Dallas and Montreal).

"One of the issues we must solve are the differences in temperature and humidity in various parts of North America," she says. "Obviously, Orlando has high humidity while Dallas is generally dry."

During 2010, Swoger and her staff will evaluate the system and try to create a standard for a chain-wide rollout. It's also part of a wider-scale energy management initiative Accor continues to evolve. Among other things, the company is looking at the Green Key Eco-Rating program that it may expand across the company.

The program, developed in Canada and in use there exclusively until last September, focuses on how hotel properties can implement sound sustainability practices. Green Key has 1,200 hotel members, including 21 Accor properties in Canada.

Accor recently launched a Green Key pilot program in 20 U.S. properties across the

Motel 6, Sofitel and Studio 6 brands. Green Key certification includes:

- A 150-question online self-audit covering a range of operational areas and sustainable practices;
- A ranking of one to five keys based on responses to the audit questions;
- A performance report given to each property with recommendations, best practices and areas for improvement and savings;
- Listing on the Green Key [website](#), a site used by many environmentally conscious travelers;
- Access to online member resources and tools; and
- On-site verification of self-audit responses by Green Key auditors.

“We like the Green Key system because it provides five levels of compliance instead of a pass-fail approach,” says Jim Amorosia, president & COO of Motel 6 and Studio 6. “We take sustainability very seriously, and our parent company has been green for decades.”

Amorosia says sustainability doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. He says in late 2008, the company launched a program to change faucet aerators throughout the system.

“This initiative cost about \$5 per room, including installation, or about \$500 per property,” says Amorosia. “The payback was less than a year, and the change has helped the properties reduce their water consumption by 10 percent.”

Similarly, Swoger says the company plans to test an irrigation control system that measures dew and precipitation in the air to determine when and how much landscape watering is needed. “It's another way to be green and save some money,” she says, “And it also gives GMs one less thing to worry about.”