



Understanding the Impact of Motel Crime



Motel crime is a problem that can't be ignored. When cities and communities look away from crime trends associated with motels and hotels, it affects everyone in the community. Crime leads to cities becoming more dangerous, property values diminishing, tourism dollars wasting away, and even people moving out of the area.

California is not immune to the realities of motel crime. In fact, we have had some disturbing stories in recent months. [Drug](#) busts, [shootings](#), and human [trafficking](#) have just been some of the recent headlines out of our state.

Cities and municipalities need to be aware of the short and long term impacts of motel crime on their communities. When there is a problem, it is the responsibility of elected and appointed officials to get involved to address it.

Motel owners and operators have a responsibility to their communities as well. Protecting your business from serious crime concerns will also protect the people who live and work where you operate.

Finally, community members with concerns about the safety of motels in their neighborhoods should document their concerns with the proper authorities.

A safe community is the responsibility of everyone who lives and works there, and it is important to be aware of motel crime issues and how to prevent them.



WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF MOTEL CRIME

Technically, any crime that takes place on motel property could be called a “motel crime.” However, there are some crime trends that are more likely to occur in a motel setting.

Illegal Drugs

Unfortunately, users of illegal drugs often end up in [motels and hotels](#). This is not a new problem. In 1993, [the Chicago Tribune](#) documented the efforts that local police were making to eliminate drug use in area hotels.

The problem is severe enough that responsible motel operators provide [training to their housekeeping staff](#) about what to do if drugs are found in a room, whether during routine housekeeping or after check-out.

Robbery

Any traveler will tell you that there are important steps to take to avoid getting robbed while on the road. Regrettably, motels are a place where many individuals have lost their belongings, cash, and valuables.

[Conde Nast Traveler](#) wrote about the “secret world” of hotel and motel theft. This problem affects lodging at all price points, in public areas and private rooms alike. Periods of [economic recession](#) are frequently associated with an increase in theft and crime at motel properties. The culprits tend to be individuals with substantial knowledge about how the property operates, but that doesn’t mean that they are “insiders.” Rather, they are opportunists who take advantage of lax security, overworked staff, and inattentive guests.

[Portland, Oregon's police department](#) offered important advice for motel operators to reduce robbery at their properties:

- Install clear outdoor lighting in parking lots, sidewalks, hallways, and alleys.
- Remove any “hiding places” by keeping things bright and removing visual barriers. (For example, use see-through fencing instead of brick walls)
- Control traffic flow at your property. People should have to come through monitored entrances to access anything else in the building.
- Issue parking permits to registered guests and visitors.
- Monitor all building and parking lot entrances.
- Fire exits should be “exit only.”
- Use video surveillance as much as possible in public spaces. The video coverage must account for those high traffic registration areas. (Include a sign that says “For your protection and ours, guest registrations may be videotaped.”)

Robbery harms guests and the business. People will not stay at a motel again if they have experienced property loss there. Reputation is everything today, and building a business means maintaining an ideal customer experience. Guests who are robbed at a property will tell people about it, and it will hurt the motel's ability to grow and increase profits.

Illegal Sex Work & Sex Trafficking

These ideas are often confused with one another, but there are some key differences. Both are a problem for motels.

Illegal sex work is any paid sex act between consenting adults that is against local, state, or federal laws. Human trafficking is a different crime, in which individuals are coerced or forced against their will to participate in an act that benefits the person who is coercing them. Two of the most common forms of human trafficking are forced labor and sex trafficking.

Many [human trafficking victims](#) have stated that where sex work is tolerated, there is often human trafficking that is also taking place. Sadly, [motel operators have a bad reputation](#) for turning a blind eye to the problem of sex work, which can then open the door to trafficking.

Hospitality industry workers can spot human trafficking by watching for specific signs. [The Blue Campaign to End Human Trafficking](#) lays out advice for people throughout the property, from front desk staff and management to housekeeping and security.



ADDRESSING MOTEL CRIME

What can stakeholders in a community watch out for? How can an elected official, motel owner, or concerned citizen reduce the criminal activities that can harm everyone involved and those who live and work nearby?

Elected & Appointed Officials

If you hold an official position in your county, town, city, or state, you can monitor motel crime by paying attention to arrest logs, court proceedings, and news stories about motels in your area.

Are you noticing a property that shows up repeatedly in these public documents? If so, it is time to review what tools are at your disposal in addressing these concerns.

Motel & Hotel Owners

Our most important advice for motel and hotel owners who want to reduce crime at their properties is to follow the best practices of the industry. Participate in continuing education programs, attend conferences, read industry publications, and more. Provide training to your staff so that everyone can be involved in the team effort of keeping your motels safe.

Concerned Citizens

Concerned citizens should seek help from their elected officials when they have concerns. Your officials may not know what you know; when you begin to see trends and consistent problems at particular properties, it is time to seek expert advice.



HOW TO GET HELP

A court-appointed receiver is a wonderful legal resource for situations like this. A court-appointed receiver serves as a legal representative of the court system. A receiver can address nuisance and crime concerns at motel properties, as well as address blighted and abandoned properties. A court can order that a receiver take legal possession and control of a problem property to ensure all nuisance activity and violations are eradicated.

Richardson “Red” Griswold has been appointed over 120 times in California courts within 15 different counties. He has served as a health and safety receiver, partition referee, tenant habitability receiver, post-judgment receiver, and rents/profits receiver.

What Happens When You Work with a Receiver

When the court appoints a receiver, the receiver takes control of troubled real estate assets, that could include motels, houses, apartments, or failed developments. The goal of the receiver is to address any issues with the property, including hoarding, drug activity, illegal activity, blight, illegal conversions, and more.

The receivership remedy is a tool that the court system of California provides in order to address concerns related to crime-ridden motels and abandoned properties. If there are properties in your community that are causing concern, [reach out to Griswold Law Receiverships today to discuss your options.](#)

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