

# THE INN FORMER



Vol. 30 Number 1

A publication for the employees of Cooper Hotels

Spring 2018

## Renovations Completed at Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs

Renovations of all guest rooms and suites, the executive lounge and hotel corridors are now complete at Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs.

Room upgrades feature the latest platform bedding including modular headboards, modular desks and hospitality centers with new refrigerators, cabinets and large screen televisions. New furniture and comfortable seating completed the new look. New carpet and wall coverings and a very modern color scheme add the finishing touches. Guest room bathrooms were also completely redesigned and renovated.

In addition, the executive floor lounge received all new furnishings, counter tops and serving hardware. Recent guests are extremely impressed with the style and comfort of the renovated facilities.



Views of Hilton Orlando/Altamonte Springs updated facilities. At top, the new king bed room in a townhouse suite. Above, the redesigned, expansive executive lounge. At left, the hotel's plush executive suite.

## Teamwork and Dedication in the Face of Hurricane Irma

The Cooper family and Cooper Hotels headquarters team are thankful to the teams at all of our Florida hotels for their sacrifices and loyalty during Hurricane Irma in September, 2017. Team member Sarah Heusing recounts her hotel's extraordinary experience, which mirrors the situation at other Florida properties.

**By Sarah Heusing, Crowne Plaza Fort Myers guest services manager**

In the week before the hurricane, no one knew where it was going. By the time Fort Myers found out we were on the radar, it was too late. Many hotels chose to close, but not us. A team of 50 employees reported to the hotel and worked non-stop during the chaos. On September 10th, Irma came ashore.

We had already lost power the day before and had been running only on a generator – with an oversold hotel. Many employees bunked together with their families to make room for people coming in off the streets for shelter. We all worked hard, but we made it fun and made the best of it. We continued without power for another four days before it was restored.

Our banquets staff served endless meals for free, Shoeless Joe's was the only restaurant in Fort Myers to never close, and our hotel was one of the only not to evacuate and leave guests stranded with nowhere to go. During our time working endlessly through the heat and exhaustion, we managed to keep 456 hotel occupants safe and fed, as well as 91 dogs, 32 cats, a bird and a ferret. That does not include the over 1,500 patrons who came in after the storm for food.

Special thanks to our kitchen team for never letting the food stop coming, the banquets team for serving so many unfortunate people, the engineering team and bell staff for keeping the generator running to allow these things to happen, the front desk team for keeping the guests calm, and the restaurant staff for never closing.



## Memo from Management

By Laurie Cooper

Cooper Hotels Vice President and General Counsel

Nothing is more important than ensuring the safety and security of our employees and guests. Everyone should be alert for "red flags" or signs that another employee or guest might pose a threat. And, we all need to plan, or at least imagine, what our response would be in an active shooter situation.

Employees should be alert for signs of suspicious activity or suspicious behavior by anyone on property. For example, front desk and housekeeping staff should be alert to types of luggage guests bring (learn to recognize a gun bag). Or, a guest's unusually lengthy use of the do-not-disturb sign. If you see something, say something – no matter how trivial.

The Cooper Hotels Employee Handbook provides that engaging in violence or making threats on company property may result in immediate dismissal without warning.

General managers may wish to consult with local law enforcement to assess your needs or get advice on how to respond to an active shooter situation.

Experts agree that imagining yourself in such a situation is the first step to prepare a response. Law enforcement advises:

- RUN (escape/evacuate)
- keep moving and contemplating your next move
- know your escape route
- evacuate and leave belongings
- call 911 when you are safe
- do not pull the fire alarm
- HIDE (in locked area out of sight)
- identify safe areas in advance
- lock and barricade the door with heavy furniture
- silence your cell phone, computers, etc.
- close blinds and turn off lights
- hide behind large items for best protection
- FIGHT (last resort)
- don't fight fair (eyes, groin, head, etc.)
- act with physical aggression
- incapacitate the shooter
- use improvised weapons (fire extinguishers, chairs, hot liquids, hard objects wrapped in a towel or any fabric)

Management and supervisors should have a formal emergency action plan which includes:

- input from law enforcement
- identification of who is responsible for IMMEDIATE NOTIFICATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
- evacuation policy, procedure, escape route assignments
- hospital locations and phone numbers
- an emergency notification system

In reality, no amount of planning can provide complete protection. Nonetheless, we should emphasize a culture of genuine concern for security at all levels and take steps to secure our hotels. We cannot eliminate the threat of an active shooter situation, but we can raise awareness and increase preparedness.