

BARCELO INCENTIVISE HEALTH AND SAFETY THROUGHOUT EUROPE

Highlights

- Using Check Safety First's electronic reporting tool, E-Cristal, the luxury hotel chain Barceló has standardised, managed and improved standards of health and safety across Europe.
- The E-Cristal system has allowed Barceló Europe to centralise its health and safety management to provide a chain-wide view of standards.
- Check Safety First's monthly ad-hoc, independent audits ensure health and safety standards remain consistently high.
- Barceló Europe has developed its own internal ranking scheme outlining top and bottom performing hotels with regards to health and safety.
- Check Safety First has trained over 1,000 Barceló Europe staff in health and safety best practice.

Setting the scene

Barceló was established 75 years ago and it is one of Spain's leading tourism companies and the UK's leading Spanish hotel chain. The group is owned by the Barceló family and has been run by three generations of family members. The chain operates in 15 countries, presenting a well-balanced portfolio of 50 per cent leisure hotels and 50 per cent city accommodation.

Like many resorts in popular tourist and business destinations, reputation is very important. "Our brand is everything," explains Eduardo Martinez, quality manager at Barceló. "Our chain is associated with high standards and quality. But, this has taken a lot of hard work over many years and we understand the potentially damaging effects that a health and safety incident could have on the brand's reputation. However, we had nothing in place to protect this."

The chain was already using Check Safety First's E-Cristal hygiene, health and safety risk management audit system in Spain, Mexico and the Caribbean, but Barceló wanted a company-wide view of any potential hygiene issues. Without a dedicated system in place to cover the entire group, Barceló was struggling to implement effective health and safety systems and processes.

The chain faced a number of challenges typical to the travel industry, these included:

- A high turnover of staff, which made it difficult to retain staff knowledge of health and safety regulations and best practices.
- A lack of consistency and accountability in health and safety reporting.
- Hotels managers were extremely busy, and health and safety was not considered as a top operational priority.

E-Cristal goes continental

In January 2008, Barceló signed a contract with Check Safety First to deploy E-Cristal throughout all of its European hotels, covering: Germany, Morocco, Turkey, Tunisia, the Czech Republic and Bulgaria. This would ensure that the hotel chain could standardise, manage and improve standards of health and safety across its entire European portfolio.

Check Safety First's Cristal programme provides hotels with a framework for developing and maintaining exceptional standards of food hygiene, which meet and exceed local and international legislative requirements. Hotels working with Check Safety First are aiming to gain the Cristal Mark, a standard developed in line with the World Health Organisation's guidelines and the benchmark for food safety since its launch in 1997.

Cristal begins with the fundamentals of health and safety, raising awareness amongst staff of the role they play in maintaining standards. This includes simple advice on activities such as how and when to wash hands, sanitation issues and how to use thermometers to improve cooking safety. The system also enables senior managers to globally co-ordinate the training requirements for employees, ensuring that health and safety is at a consistently high standard throughout the entire organisation.

"We understand that the success of our business is based on our employees, and we can only maintain high levels of service and hygiene if all staff are properly trained. High standards cannot be achieved without a considerable amount of effort and dedication," explains Martinez. "Through the E-Cristal system we get a centralised view of who has been trained in a particular area of health and safety, when it took place, the examination results following the training, whether they passed or failed and when the course needs to be renewed. In addition, when a new member of staff joins we are automatically informed of the training requirements of the employee, determined by their preloaded job role template."

In addition to the training elements of the system, the tool centralises the management of the processes associated with exceptional standards of hygiene, health and safety. This enables

hotels to create an audit trail of health and safety activities and ensures that the appropriate steps are being followed across the whole chain.

As well as immediate reporting of ongoing health and safety checks, the E-Cristal system offers guidance on necessary improvements and sets out timeframes for their implementation. This provides the team with more accurate information on standards throughout all their hotels and enables them to plan for future activities.

Health and safety league table

Check Safety First also undertakes monthly, ad-hoc assessments and appraisals of Barceló Europe hotels. This ensures that improvements are independently validated and that potential risks are monitored in line with the requirements of Cristal. The ongoing audit process covers food delivery at the correct temperatures, storage, cooking, handling, disposal and room cleanliness.

“At the end of each audit, the hotel is scored out of 100 and, through the E-Cristal system, I can keep track of the results for each of the European hotels,” states Martinez. “These results are then collated into a league table and circulated throughout the whole chain highlighting top and bottom performing hotels with regards to health and safety. Essentially we’re naming and shaming. Internally no hotel wants to be ranked last, and we have found that by making the results available to employees it motivates our hotel managers to ensure that standards are constantly high. A good result is seen as a plaque of honour and inspires success.”

Cristal approved

Due to the significant efforts in health and safety across the Barceló Europe chain, 60 hotels from within the group have been added to Check Safety First’s online database. The company’s website www.checksafetyfirst.com is the only site to provide the travelling public with access to a database of venues that have obtained the Cristal Mark for their commitment to food hygiene and safety standards.

These listings have been as a direct result of the dedication that hotel managers and the board of directors have demonstrated with regards to the health and safety and staff training. To date, over 1,000 Barceló Europe staff have been trained by Check Safety First

specialists, and this education programme is continuously refreshed and tested with existing and new employees to the chain.

Martinez concludes: "We are very proud of the commitment that all parties have demonstrated to attaining the Cristal Mark for each hotel, as it's indicative of the high importance Barceló places upon safety in our resorts. All hotels within our chain aim to deliver standards of safety, quality and environmental best practice which go beyond the norm and since the resorts are particularly popular with families, I'm sure that our customers will also welcome the highly-regarded stamp of approval that being listed on the Check Safety First website brings."

Barceló Europe is demonstrating continued commitment to health and safety and has expanded its work with Check Safety First to cover swimming pool safety, fire safety and Legionella control, as well as the central food hygiene module.