

Saving Earth, one practice at a time

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Lying back on the beach under the bright yellow sun and sipping on a fruit cocktail at a five-star hotel is pure luxury. While relaxing you are not only wiping out waste but also making the world greener!

Le Royal Meridien Beach Resort and Spa and the Grosvenor House in Dubai have taken extra steps to ensure the hotels are wiping out as much waste as possible.

Both hotels actively employ environmentally friendly practices. Jaideep J. Bhatia, director of marketing and communications of the two hotels, said: "We have long been a supporter of environmental awareness, but recycling paper and plastic is no longer enough these days."

The hotels have installed water flow reduction systems to decrease the amount of grey water wasted from taps and showers in the hotels. Water being flushed in bathrooms is also reduced.

However, the grey water, water that goes down the shower drains, sinks, and other appliances such as dishwashers, is then used to water the hotel's gardens. The two hotels have their own treatment plants that clean and transfer the used water to the gardens.

The water-saving initiatives saved more than five million litres of water last month, as compared to April 2008, saving more than Dh52,000. If converted to drinking water, that would be enough to feed 52,000 people for a month.

Saving nearly half a million

Taking it down to the smallest detail, the hotels use WaterWise NO H₂O, a waterless carwash formula, to keep their cars spotless. Instead of wasting 180 litres on every car, the formula eliminates the use of water and saves more than 48,600 litres a month, otherwise used for washing the hotel's nine cars.

Bhatia said: "With the number of times we clean our cars in the hotel it actually saves us money by saving water. It comes down to a little over Dh4 per wash, compared to paying Dh30 at the carwash."

The hotels also look at ways to conserve electricity, such as using the steam released by the laundry to heat the hotels' swimming pools and energy-saving light bulbs in the rooms.

These initiatives have saved the hotels nearly Dh321,000 and 977,372 Kilowatts of electricity in April 2009, compared to the consumption in April 2008. That is enough to power an individual's electricity needs in the UAE for nearly 50 years.

The hotels' plans do not end with power and water conservation. They also frequently train

their staff to think and act in environmentally friendly ways.

The two hotels have formed an eco-friendly committee to find new and creative ways at minimising any kind of waste produced by the hotels.

Twice a month the Environmental Committee meets to discuss consumption figures for electricity, water, gas and paper, which are then presented in the operational meetings where suggestions and actions are taken to reduce those figures.

Sharukh Billimoria, director of quality and training for the hotels, said: "Since we have a large number of staff here, it is quite important that we have their buy-in for all the initiatives that we carry out."

The management also has 'eco-suggestion' log books placed in the staff restaurant areas where employees can write feedback and initiatives that could be implemented.

Educating people

An intense energy and water conservation programme was created to raise awareness among the staff and teach them how to think and act in ways to minimise waste every day.

Bhatia said: "We continually increase awareness amongst our associates through training on reduced energy consumption, reduced and recycled waste, and a concrete environmental policy."

To make sure that the staff do not forget any of this information it is required for all 1,900 employees of the two hotels to take an eco-awareness quiz and training every four months.

The training also includes educating the staff to separate glass, plastic, paper, aluminium, cans, oil and cartridges, which are then thrown in the 200 recycling bins provided in the hotel and taken to a recycling company.

The saving does not stop there, interaction between the staff is done through electronics to save any paper waste. Bhatia said: "Thanks to intranet, paperless processes are becoming more common around the office."

If that is not enough, the hotels also try to have their guests help out in conserving energy and water. Bhatia said: "We ask our guests who wish to participate in our initiatives to use their towel more than once. It saves water and electricity by not having to wash it every time."

Both the hotels are also quite popular among the eco-friendly events happening around the UAE. Events include different activities every month such as the Emirates Environmental Group's annual Clean Up the World initiative and the hotels' in-house Recycled Art Competition where the staff create innovative forms of art using the recycled products in their department.