

Comparison of Seattle and State Laws on Hotel Panic Buttons

Hotel Employees Safety Protections Ordinance | SMC 14.26

In 2019, Seattle passed [SMC 14.26](#) to protect employees that work in hotels and ancillary hotel businesses from violent and harassing guest conduct. The law requires hotel employers to supply panic buttons to hotel employees and employees of ancillary hotel businesses when those employees work in or make deliveries to a hotel guest room.

Isolated Worker Protections | RCW 49.60.515

In 2019, the State passed [RCW 49.60.515](#) to protect janitors, security guards, hotel and motel housekeepers, and room service attendants who primarily work alone or without another coworker from sexual assault and harassment. The law requires covered employers to supply a panic button to each covered employee.

Topic	Seattle law	Washington State law
Employees	<p>Seattle Minimum Wage employees that work at a hotel or motel of 60 or more rooms or at ancillary hotel business.</p> <p>For information on which employees are covered by Seattle’s Minimum Wage, please visit the OLS website.</p>	<p>Janitors, security guards, hotel and motel housekeepers, and room service attendants who perform most working hours alone or whose primary responsibility involves working without another coworker.</p>
Employers	<p>Employer that owns, controls, or operates a hotel, motel, or an ancillary hotel business in the City.</p>	<p>Employer that is a hotel, motel, retail, security guard entity, or property services contractor</p>
What is a Panic Button	<p>Emergency contact device that an employee may easily carry and activate. When activated, the panic button must summon immediate on-scene help from another employee, security guard, or representative of the employer to the employee’s specific location</p>	<p>Emergency contact device carried by an employee by which the employee may summon immediate on-scene help from another worker, a security guard, or a representative of the employer</p>
Panic Buttons	<p><i>Hotel</i> employer must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > provide its employees with a panic button when assigned to work in, or make deliveries to, a guest room; and > give employees of ancillary hotel businesses access to its panic buttons when assigned to work in, or make deliveries to, a guest room. 	<p>Employer must supply a panic button to each covered employee.</p>



Written Policy	<p>Employer must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > develop policies and procedures that prevent and address violent and harassing guest conduct; and > inform guests of this policy at check-in and inform employees at hire and annually. 	Employer must adopt a sexual harassment policy.
Training	Not applicable	Employer must give training to employees and managers to prevent sexual assault, sexual harassment, and sexual discrimination in the workplace.
Steps after an Employee Reports	<p>Employers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Must provide accused guest with notice of the law’s minimum employee safeguards. Employers must give a copy to the employee also. > Take necessary steps to safeguard employees from future acts. > Shall not assign employees to work in guest room or make deliveries during guest’s stay. > May assign employees to enter the guest room to conduct a safety check with another employee (employees may decline). 	This law does not specify the steps the employer must take after an employee reports.
Protecting Employees who report	<p>Employers must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Reassign employee to equivalent or better assignment in a different area for duration of guest’s stay (upon request/consent). > Provide employee with notice of right to a community or crime victim advocate and other rights of survivors. > Grant employee up to 16 hours of paid time to use within 14 days to contact the police and consult a counselor/advisor/advocate. > Cooperate with law enforcement. 	This law does not specify the actions the employer must take after an employee reports. However, please see the Washington State Human Rights Commission website for information about other state law requirements related to employment discrimination and harassment.
Door Signs and Other Resources	Hotels must place signs about the law on the back of guest room doors.	Employer must give a list of resources to employees, including contact information of the equal employment opportunity commission, the Washington state human rights commission, and

		local advocacy groups focused on preventing sexual harassment and sexual assault.
Employer Records	Must keep compliance records for five years	The law does not specify recordkeeping requirements.
Retaliation	Prohibited	This is not addressed in the Washington State law
Other	Agency must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Create a notice of worker rights (poster). > Create a notice of community/crime victim advocate rights. > Enter a contract with a community-based, crime victims advocacy agency for referrals. 	This is not addressed in the Washington State law
Effective Date	July 1, 2020 Employers may follow state requirements for panic buttons until December 31, 2020.	Hotels and motels with 60+ rooms: January 1, 2020 Other employers: January 1, 2021
Agency	Seattle Office of Labor Standards	Washington State Human Rights Commission Washington State Labor & Industries supplies guidance, including a Q&A on panic buttons

Other Laws: Adult Entertainer Safety | Revised Code of Washington 49.17.470

In 2019, the State passed [RCW 49.17.470](#) which requires adult entertainment establishments to give panic buttons to their employees. OLS does not examine this law because there is no overlap with Seattle’s law, but it is worth noting that the Washington State Labor & Industries enforces this law.