

New Metric Emerges from Willard InterContinental's Sustainability Report

By Glenn Hasek
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Could the measurement "Greenhouse Gas Emissions Per Occupied Room" (GEPOR) one day be as common as revenue per available room (RevPAR)? In putting together its 2007 Sustainability Report—probably the first one produced by an individual hotel in the United States—the [Willard InterContinental Hotel](#) in Washington, D.C. used the GEPOR metric to establish its specific annual carbon footprint. The Willard worked with Washington, D.C.-based EnviRelation, LLC to put together the report. EnviRelation, which provides emissions management services, created the GEPOR metric which takes into account criteria such as a hotel's square footage, electricity and natural gas consumption, gallons of water used, etc.

What the Willard and EnviRelation have done is extremely important. They have established a baseline from which to improve in 2008 and beyond. They have also taken the first step in establishing a metric that eventually could become the standard for measuring the lodging industry's carbon footprint. According to EnviRelation's Eric Ricaurte, it is his company's intention to collect data from as many as 100 hotels over the next several years so that they can more easily analyze hotels' average carbon impact nationally, by region, and even by segment. Knowing a property's specific resource consumption will come into play within the next five years when regulations are expected to come along that will require commercial establishments to account for their carbon footprint.

Hervé Houdré, general manager of the Willard InterContinental, is excited about his hotel's Sustainability Report because it covers all aspects of its triple bottom line strategy of economic prosperity, social responsibility and environmental protection. Because the report adheres to the standards established by the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI), it highlights both the hotel's positive accomplishments as well as areas in need of improvement.

Reaction to 2007 Report

Here are some additional thoughts after reading through the Willard's 2007 Sustainability Report:

Because the Willard knows the specific impact of its operations, it can more easily calculate what it needs to do to offset that impact. A year ago, the hotel committed to purchase renewable energy credits from Pepco Energy Services, a subsidiary of Pepco Holdings, Inc. The property is now 100 percent powered by wind energy. Because the hotel will have gone through all of 2008 with this program, its 2008 Sustainability Report will show significant improvement in regard to environmental impact.

The report appropriately includes the hotel's sustainability mission statement: "To model a culture that promotes sustainable development ideals and quality improvement processes that are the benchmark for the industry." The report also states the hotel's values. I suspect there are few general managers that have gone through the process of establishing a sustainability mission statement, or a list of core values.

The Willard not only reports on where it has been; it has also established goals for continuous improvement. Its roadmap outlines economic, social and environmental initiatives and goals. Initiatives are set for each goal, with metrics for measurement and specific, metric-related targets to be achieved each year. These targets provide guidance for the Willard from 2008 until 2012.

Honest Talk About Energy Use

The hotel is honest about not achieving reductions in all areas. For example, in 2007, the hotel used 87.7 kWh of electricity per occupied room, 18.5 percent above its goal of 74 kWh per occupied room. Some of the increase was caused by the addition of a new restaurant.

While the report does include some pie charts and graphs, additional ones would have been helpful.

The hotel appropriately highlights its significant accomplishments in the area of waste reduction. In 2006, Houdré says the hotel did not recycle. In 2007, recycling volume was 27 tons. The hotel is on track to hit 35 tons this year.

The report includes summaries of its efforts in regard to human rights and worker safety. The report does not include specific work place safety data. While not a factory environment, where the potential for incidents is greater, it still would have been nice to see some safety numbers.

The Sustainability Report includes a Glossary of Terms—something that was definitely needed, given the use of terms such as Metric Tons of Carbon Dioxide Equivalent.

Overall, the report was a groundbreaking effort that merits review by any hotel owner or manager. (To access the report, [click here](#).) It will be interesting to see whether or not GEPOR becomes an accepted standard. Contact Eric Ricourte at eric@envirelation.com for more details on how GEPOR is calculated.

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