Hotel Groups Fight Wage Law

Two national hotel-industry groups are suing the City of Los Angeles, arguing a recent minimum-wage increase for hospitality workers unfairly targets the lodging business and runs afoul of federal labor law.

The suit, filed in federal court by the American Hotel & Lodging Association and the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, takes aim at the city’s new Hotel Workers Act, which raises the hourly minimum wage for large-hotel workers in Los Angeles to $15.37. City Council passed the ordinance this fall and it is slated to take effect in July for hotels with more than 300 rooms. Hotels with at least 150 rooms will have another year to comply.

But the industry groups said their lawsuit wasn’t about the wage increase, but about a provision of the act that allows any part of the law to be waived at hotels covered by a collective-bargaining agreement. The industry groups believe the law allows unions to potentially pressure non-unionized hotels to organize. The suit also argues that the ordinance violates state and federal equal-protection clauses by unfairly targeting a single industry.

“This lawsuit is about the fact that the City of Los Angeles took an action that disrupts established labor law,” said Katherine Lugar, chief executive of AH&LA. “Changing the fundamental ground rules in any one city will have real national implications.” The industry groups are asking the court to declare the law in violation of state and federal laws and enjoin its enforcement.

Minimum-wage increases have been passed by cities across the US, including in San Francisco, Seattle and Chicago, and some have been challenged in court. The International Franchise Association, for example, filed suit against Seattle in June after its City Council approved a gradual increase to $15 an hour.

Seattle’s law allows businesses with fewer than 500 employees to phase in the mandate more slowly than larger employers. But it counts a franchise operation, such as a fast-food restaurant, as a large employer if the brand employs more than 500 workers anywhere in the country. The suit is pending in US District Court in Seattle.

The Los Angeles ordinance is one of very few that apply specifically to hotel workers. A previous unsuccessful challenge to similar law for hospitality workers near Los Angeles International Airport came in state court, not federal. The federal court could find that any different treatment of union and non-union employers violates federal labor laws, said Paul DeCamp, an attorney at Jackson Lewis PC and former Labor Department official in the George W. Bush administration. “A City Council can’t pass a law that interferes with federal labor policy,” said Mr. DeCamp, who isn’t connected to the suit.

Hotels Let Guests Borrow Items or Leave Them

Until last year, when she became a planning consultant for a college in Florida, Alison Barlow traveled almost full time for an information technology company. She was away as long as three weeks a month. When a hotel stay at a Hampton Inn in suburban Omaha was punctuated by a bout of flu, the staff made drugstore runs and brought her tea and crackers. Knowing she would return soon, she would leave a bag behind with toiletries, workout wear and extra clothes. “You don’t want to check luggage on an airplane,” she said. While staying at a Candlewood Suites, she borrowed books and DVDs.

As hotels continue to add all manner of fees and executives look over their shoulders at Airbnb and the sharing economy, they are increasingly telling guests to pack light and borrow items from them. While loan programs are an accepted feature at luxury and full-service hotels, experts say that those hotels are now expanding their offerings to include bicycles, automobiles and running gear.

And hotels on a lower tier, like Candlewood Suites, are starting their own programs. It’s reached all the way down from luxury to full-service hotels, and it’s not unusual for select service,” says Bjorn Hanson, professor at the Tisch Center for Hospitality and Tourism at New York University.

Some programs—like Kimpton Hotels’ “Forgot It? We’ve Got It!”—have been available for a decade. They are drawing renewed attention because younger travelers are responding to hotels’ attempts to create a relationship by going out of their way for guests. The Kimpton program offers a variety of small items and appliances, including chargers, hair dryers, extension cords and curling irons.

“Hyatt Has It!” was introduced in February 2013 with similar offerings. “Before, travelers thought we didn’t offer any product other than a toothbrush,” says Kristine Rose, vice president for brand experience at Hyatt. The program is aimed at the female traveler. “Women tend to travel with a lot more
things in their luggage,” she said. The program is offered under different names at all Hyatt brands.

In addition to lending books and DVDs, Candlewood Suites, an extended-stay division of the InterContinental Hotels Group, introduced a Lending Locker in 300 hotels in October 2013. The floor-to-ceiling enclosure provides items not typically found in guest rooms including fans, crockpots, dehumidifiers and office supplies. Robert Radomski, vice president for brand management at IHG’s extended-stay brands, which include Candlewood Suites, says the program creates a feeling of belonging for guests. “It adds to their comfort,” he said.

Some programs emphasize fitness. Westin Hotels introduced a Westin-New Balance equipment-lending program at more than 200 hotels in November 2012. The company estimates 30,000 guests a year participate. Peter Shankman, an entrepreneur and author of the coming book “Zombie Loyalists” was one. Fourteen months ago, at a Westin in Atlanta, he was up at 5 a.m. for a run before an early meeting. After donning his shorts, he realized he forgot to pack running socks. Expecting to run a 10-kilometer race three days later, he thought wearing dress socks for a seven-mile run that morning invited blisters. The front desk staff offered him a free pair of running socks. “They allowed me to continue on a schedule I preferred, which meant more to me than anything,” he said. Still, he has not traveled without his own equipment since. A Westin hotel typically charges $5 per stay for the socks, freshly laundered workout wear in a variety of sizes for both sexes, and sneakers that are cleaned and disinfected after each use. The inner soles are changed monthly.

Fitness appeal takes different forms. In July 2013, Kimpton, in partnership with Public, a San Francisco boutique bicycle and equipment company, introduced a fleet of Kimpton-branded bicycles that are free for guests to use. Two to 10 bikes are available at 61 locations.

For guests who prefer four wheels, Loews introduced a chauffeur-driven car at five locations nationwide to take guests to nearby destinations. Guests are responsible for their return transportation to the hotel. At locations in Miami, Hollywood and Santa Monica, the hotels also offer free Fiat loaner cars.

Even as loan programs can create greater loyalty and perhaps a willingness to pay a premium for a specific hotel, they have potential drawbacks, according to one expert, who sees the possibility that fewer guests will request items in the future, because of concerns about health and well-being. “Some hotels may temporarily suspend these items as a precautionary response to protecting guest health and reducing liability,” Henry Harteveldt, an analyst at Atmosphere Research Group, wrote in an e-mail.

For some guests, like Ms. Barlow, a preferred amenity is the ability to leave belongings behind. Mike DeFrino, the chief operating officer at Kimpton Hotels, said he had noticed at locations in Cambridge, MA, and Cupertino, CA, as many as 5% of guests are leaving bags behind. By accepting guest property for safekeeping, hotels run the risk of losing reputation and loyalty if something happens to it. “The worst thing is to lose or misplace a guest item,” Mr. Hanson said. Ms. Barlow said she drew the line at leaving a laptop. Still, even as her travel has abated, she said she missed staying at a hotel.

Zipkin, Amy, "Hotels Let Guests Borrow Items or Leave Them," nytimes.com/2014/12/08/business/hotels-let-guests-borrow-items-or-leave-them.html?_r=0, December 8, 2014

Ladacor completes largest shipping container-based hotel in North America

Ladacor announced the official hotel opening of Days Inn Sioux Lookout, Ontario, Canada following fast-tracked construction utilizing Ladacor’s Advanced Modular System™ building technology, making it the largest shipping container-based hotel in North America.

Ladacor’s Advanced Modular System™ technology utilizes shipping containers as a durable steel modular core. “In the case of Days Inn Sioux Lookout, we are proud to have not only created an environmentally sustainable and progressive solution for our client by repurposing 120 surplus shipping containers, we have developed a very high quality project to meet stringent standards of the Days Inn brand,” said Joseph Kiss, Ladacor President.

“A Steenhoef Building Services has been working with Ladacor since the beginning of this exciting project. The use of a modular system was well suited for the Sioux Lookout location and the challenges of building in Northern Ontario. The engineering solutions developed by our team provided a great partnership with Ladacor’s Advanced Modular System™, where we were able to use innovative design approaches to complete the structure in record time.

“We were looking for a solution that was quicker and better,” said Don Klosowsky, Owner, Days Inn Sioux Lookout. “Ladacor’s Advanced Modular System™ allowed us to build a top quality hotel in only 13 months compared to an estimated 2.5 years using traditional methods, allowing us to occupy and start the return-on-investment sooner.”


Germs’ favorite hiding places in hotel rooms revealed

A TV investigation at five of the top hotel chains in the country revealed the cleanest spot in a typical hotel room—and the dirtiest. The team booked rooms at five top hotel chains across the country. After maids had cleaned up the rooms, bacteria expert Dr. Luisa Ikner, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona Gerba Lab, applied test swabs to various areas of the rooms. A meter provided instant readouts of the bacteria counts. Anything over 100 on the scale was considered an unacceptable level of bacteria. (In addition to bacteria, other types of germs such as viruses can also be spread by contact with the skin.)

The light switches were the cleanest areas found, delivering readings as low as 6. The alarm clocks and nightstands were also pretty good. But at nearly every hotel, the phones were teeming with bacteria—double or even more than triple the acceptable limit of 100. “People touch them a lot and they’re not surfaces that are cleaned by the maids,” Ikner said. Ikner also used an ultraviolet light to look for stains not normally detected by the human eye. It revealed hidden stains all over the rooms, including a sofa and a curtain.

But the single dirtiest thing was the TV remote control. All of the remotes in the rooms tested registered sky-high levels of bacteria, with one delivering a 498, the highest reading measured. "That's how a lot of infectious viruses are transmitted," Ikner said. Laboratory testing of a sample from one TV remote revealed colonies of E. coli. "This indicates there was fecal contamination on the remote," Ikner explained. "So perhaps someone used the restroom and didn't wash their hands when they were done." Even worse, another remote bore MRSA—a highly contagious and dangerous bacterium, resistant to most antibiotics, that can cause painful skin infections.

Ikner had three suggestions for hotel guests to protect themselves from bacteria: "Wash your hands, use hand sanitizer, and wipe down surfaces with a disinfectant wipe."

**Note from Larry Groipen, ALLY MEMBER ERCwipe.com:**
One thing we have always promoted is the need to use color-coded cleaning cloths—preferably microfiber. This is because housekeepers, if not provided with the right wiping tools, will use guest linens to clean. Using towels and wash cloths that guests have already used in their bathrooms will naturally result in cross-contamination, and it’s no surprise that the remote control and telephone keypads are the surfaces with the highest concentration of germs. A very simple solution is to use an antibacterial wipe and run it over those two surfaces (at least) prior to leaving the room. A wipe that contains a Quaternary disinfectant will clean and disinfect with one application and kill most bacteria, including MRSA.

The difficulty, of course, is convincing management to realize that the 2-3 cents cost per wipe is totally worth it. Another possibility is to provide packaged wipes that the guest can use on any surface they wish to clean/disinfect.

**Statement from the American Hotel & Lodging Association in response to this report:**
"As a driver of job growth and economic opportunity, the hospitality industry offers accommodations for millions of guests each night and ensuring a clean and comfortable environment is a top priority. Housekeepers do not have an easy job and they work incredibly hard to adhere to strict standards of cleanliness.

Our hotels regularly review and update housekeeping protocols. And though not empowered to set standards for the lodging industry, the American Hotel and Lodging Association offers resources, information and products for hoteliers, and encourages the entire hotel community to continuously evaluate existing policies and practices as a precautionary measure and to upgrade them as needed."

**Gundersen reaches first days of energy independence**
Gundersen Health System achieved its first days of energy independence, becoming the first health system in the nation to attain the distinction. October 14, 2014 was the first day that Gundersen produced more energy than the health system consumed.

In 2008, Dr. Jeff Thompson, Gundersen CEO, set a goal for the organization to control rising energy costs and improve the health of the communities it serves. They focused on two main initiatives—reducing consumption by improving efficiency and creating cleaner energy. "We did not set out to be the greenest health system," says Dr. Thompson. "We set out to make the air better for our patients to breathe, control our rising energy costs and help our local economy. We believe we have made more progress on all three than anyone else in the country."

Gundersen’s accomplishments include energy efficiency improvement of over 40% resulting in annual financial savings of nearly $2 million from conservation alone. Regional partnerships in energy creation include dairy digesters, wind turbines and a landfill gas-to-energy initiative. Local projects also include geothermal energy and a biomass boiler. "We are keeping nearly 477,000 pounds of particulates out of the atmosphere each year," adds Dr. Thompson.

"We set our sights on a goal that had never been achieved. And while we are a national leader, we still have work to do," says Jeff Rich, executive director of **ALLY MEMBER Envision®, Gundersen's energy subsidiary.** "We have crossed the threshold to energy independence. It’s like breaking the sound barrier. We were the first to do it and it’s pretty astounding. Our next chapter will be to turn the days into months and years."

Producing more clean energy than they use has been a challenge and a moving target. Hospitals typically use two and a half times more energy than commercial buildings. Wisconsin has one of the most energy-intensive climates in the nation. Also, since the goal was set, expansion has occurred within Gundersen, including construction of two new hospitals (a 25% increase in space). "We have shown that you can be financially disciplined, improve the local economy and positively impact the environment," adds Dr. Thompson.

Any organization can start small by taking no-cost measures to save energy and build from there. **Envision®** can help you achieve your energy goals.

**One of Largest Solar PV Hotel Installations**
Marianne Balfe, Marriott’s Director of Energy and Environment Sustainability, and Loren Nalewanski, Vice President of Global Brand Management TownePlace Suites join green energy leaders in congratulating TownePlace Suites at Joint Base Andrews on its 706 kW Photovoltaic electric generating project which will provide 90-100% of the power for this hotel located in Clinton, MD.

The solar array, located on four acres adjacent to the hotel, will generate enough electricity to offset almost 100% of the electricity needed by the hotel. With additional conservation measures being put in place soon, the hotel will likely be 100% solar powered in the near future.

The hotel prides itself on providing a “home away from home” for military troops and their families. This initiative will serve not only the hotel, but the military community as well by participating in the military’s mission in expanding the use of
renewable energy.


If ladybugs move in this fall, make them welcome

During the warm months of the year, ladybugs are like adorable, bright-colored lapel pins. They land on us, accessorize our clothing in brilliant red or orange with stylish black spots, and are delightful to have around. Several cultures even think of ladybugs as good luck charms for anything from marriage to childbirth to the weather to a good harvest.

Then fall arrives and the ladybugs need to find warmth, which is most available inside people’s homes—where they often descend in large numbers. Suddenly they’re not as cute to many people as they seemed outdoors. But Jessica Ware, an insect expert and assistant professor of biology at Rutgers University-Newark, says having ladybugs indoors serves a very useful purpose, and humans should welcome their temporary houseguests.

“They’re actually great to have around,” Ware says, “because they’re most often predatory and they eat the insects we consider to be pests—especially aphids, soft-bodied insects that feed on vegetation. If you have aphids on any of your houseplants, and you have ladybugs in your house, you’ll no longer have aphids and your plants will be fine. Do not kill the ladybugs. Do not spray them—because if you do, then you’re destroying some of the natural predators that keep pests in check.”

Because ladybug beetles (their actual name) gather in big groups—mutually attracted by each other’s pheromones—they’ll often enter just one home in a neighborhood and skip the others. Ware says there is no good way of predicting which house they will want—except that they tend to like their environment moist and warm—much as we humans do.

If they’re already in your house, says Ware, you’ve probably got them ‘til spring. Many will die over the winter, and those that don’t will go back outside when the weather warms up. That is when Ware says you will have performed a true public service by hosting them through the cold months. They’ll devour aphids in your garden—if you have one—as they did all winter for your houseplants. They also will go after aphids in your neighbors’ gardens—as well as on farms where summer fruits and vegetables grow.

“Aphids are one of the most common pests in people’s flower gardens, and they especially like to destroy ornamental plants like tulips and daffodils and the beautiful things you see in spring,” says Ware. “Aphids basically suck the juice out of the plants and kill them, and they can breed by the thousands in a matter of days. But not if ladybugs get them first.”

Europe’s Plastic Bag Agreement

As lawmakers reached agreement this week to limit the use of plastic bags across Europe, industry voices warned that such rules will have a negative impact on trade in Europe’s internal market. The ban could also lead to different standards in legislation in member states and ultimately, to a ban on other types of packaging, according to PlasticsEurope, the association of plastics manufacturers.

The European Parliament and the Council agreed on EU-wide legislation obliging member states to reduce the use of plastic bags. The law will apply only to bags with a thickness below 0.05mm, because they are less reusable, and turn into waste more quickly.

“This is a historic moment for all of Europe. For the first time ever, we have agreed on ambitious measures to reduce the amount of plastic waste in the environment,” said Margrete Auken, a Danish MEP from the Greens/EFA group, who negotiated the law on behalf of the European Parliament. The new agreement, which is obligatory in all EU countries, gives national governments two ways to implement it. Either reduce consumption by 90 lightweight bags per citizen by 2019, and 40 bags by 2025, or have a mandatory charge by 2018. Average consumption of single-use plastic bags was found to be at 176 bags per person per year in 2010.

These reduction targets will “limit the negative impacts of plastic carrier bag littering on the environment and encourage waste prevention,” according to a statement posted on the Council’s website. Most of the plastic bags end up as waste in the EU waters, and it takes “hundreds of years before they are fully degradable,” the statement said.

Casinghe, Ecaterina, EurActiv, Europe’s Plastic Bag Agreement Contested by Industry, enn.com/top_stories/article/48040/print, November 26, 2014

Turtle Bay Resort implements Maestro iPad Xpress check-in/out

Turtle Bay Resort on Oahu’s fabled North Shore implements the Maestro iPad Xpress check-in. Maestro’s mobile iPad solution is fully-integrated with Maestro PMS and updated in real time to perform all aspects of front office functionality and service. “Maestro’s iPad wireless solution provides our team with the perfect opportunity to personalize a guest’s arrival experience after their trip,” said Victoria Solis, director of guest services for the 452-room resort. “We give guests a fun island greeting at check-in as we walk them across the property.”

“We use the iPad Xpress’ electronic signature capture capability. We are a green hotel and we value not having to waste additional paper for registration cards,” she continued. The remote functionality is integrated with the Maestro Front Office including key encoding. In addition to registering guests from airport shuttles and curbside, Maestro Xpress can show room options, upgrades, activities and amenities to generate revenue. The iPad synchronizes data in real time. Availability and rates are accurate so service is delivered confidently. Maestro iPad Xpress Check-In works seamlessly with multiple versions of Maestro PMS, including on-premise, remotely-hosted and property-based self-hosted implementations.

http://www.hotelmanagement.net/technology/turtle-bay-resort-implements-maestro-ipad-xpress-check-in-out-29659&utm_source=newsletter&utm_medium=newsletter&utm_campaign=unknown&utm_content=29659&spMailingID=2178509&spUserID=Mjg4NjIwMDIzNTkS1&spJobID=460214596&spReportId=NDYwMjE0NTk2S0
Whole Foods’ produce rating system spurs farm action

Whole Foods has become one of the first US retailers to go above and beyond government standards with a new tiered rating system that could redefine what constitutes responsibly-grown produce. The company spent three years collaborating with suppliers, scientists and experts to develop the rating system, Responsibly Grown. It labels fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers as “good,” “better” or “best” to help shoppers make more informed choices in the produce and floral departments. The scheme also prohibits some of the most hazardous neonicotinoids still allowed in agriculture, including several organophosphate insecticides, which can impair neurological development in children born to mothers exposed via diet, agricultural work or living in nearby communities.

“At this time, we have approximately 505 of our produce rated nationally, and we are working toward our goal of having all of our produce and flowers rated in Responsibly Grown,” Matt Rogers, Whole Foods’ global produce coordinator said. Responsibly Grown also addresses the primary threats facing pollinators, including high-risk pesticide use, loss of habitat and disease spread from managed bees, as well as wild pollinators. Four of the most common neonicotinoids allowed in the US will be prohibited for growers to reach the Responsibly Grown “best” level. Recent studies have found that the presence of even small amounts of neonicotinoids can have "sub-lethal" or deadly effects on wildlife.

How the scoring system works

To earn a “good” rating, a farm must take 16 major steps to protect air, soil, water and human health. Growers also must comply with the Responsibly Grown pesticide policy, which restricts growers to using only pesticides registered with the Environmental Protection Agency, regardless of the country of origin. This means that farms outside the US can’t supply Whole Foods Market with fresh fruits, vegetables and flowers grown using pesticides not allowed in the US; there are a few exceptions. Growers also cannot use biosolids or irradiation and must commit to GMO transparency. A “better” rating indicates advanced performance, and a “best” rating indicates exceptional, industry-leading performance.

According to Whole Foods, the system covers multiple topics in each key category:

- Pest management: using beneficial insects to control pests
- Farmworker welfare: providing protective equipment for workers
- Water conservation and protection: using efficient irrigation techniques
- Enhancing soil health: adding compost to soil, planting cover crops
- Ecosystems and biodiversity: planting wildflowers to restore natural bee habitat for pollinator protection
- Waste reduction: recycling plastics used in the field
- Air, energy and climate: solar panels for renewable energy

Whole Foods hopes to reward growers for existing accomplishments and raise the bar to encourage continuous improvement, while avoiding creating additional burdens.

Transparent supply chains equal good business

Whole Foods is well aware that climate change, extreme weather events and bulging populations are making it difficult for the produce retail industry to offer healthy, affordable food to consumers. Changing climatic conditions affect environmental and socioeconomic outcomes for agriculture, according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. The disruption causes changes in the availability and quality of land, soil and water resources that are later reflected in crop performance, which causes prices to rise.

Understanding these challenges is the first step in being able to overcome them. Walmart-owned UK supermarket chain Asda worked with consultants PwC earlier this year to map its entire fresh produce supply chain. Using models practiced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, it found that as much as 95% of its fresh produce category is under threat from the impacts of global warming. Responsibly Grown will allow Whole Foods to better weather the effects of climate change by guaranteeing a resilient supply chain. This undoubtedly will prove to be a competitive advantage over retailers with less transparent and sustainable sourcing policies.

O Christmas Tree, O Christmas Tree

The tradition of the Capitol Christmas Tree, or The People’s Tree, began in 1964 when Speaker of the US House of Representatives John W. McCormack (D-MA) placed a live Christmas tree on the Capitol lawn. This tree lived three years before succumbing to wind and root damage. In 1970, the Capitol Architect asked the US Forest Service to provide a Christmas tree on the Capitol lawn. This tree lived three years before succumbing to wind and root damage. In 1970, the Capitol Architect asked the US Forest Service to provide a Christmas tree on the Capitol lawn. This tree lived three years before succumbing to wind and root damage. In 1970, the Capitol Architect asked the US Forest Service to provide a Christmas tree on the Capitol lawn. This tree lived three years before succumbing to wind and root damage.
of the Year award from the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc. (SFI). That begs the question how can a logger win an award from a sustainability group?

Logging tends to have a bad rep in the environmental sustainability sphere, but professional loggers like Scheff actually play a big role in sustainable forestry. They are using and influencing best management practices aimed at protecting water and other key parts of the forest environment. Various state programs help provide training and certification to meet sustainable logging practices including safe, productive and environmentally responsible timber harvesting.

But what about the Christmas tree business in general? Just how sustainable are Christmas tree farms? According to the University of Illinois, there are approximately 350 million Christmas trees growing on US farms. In 2012, 24.5 million farm-grown Christmas trees were purchased. While one may think chopping down all these trees could be detrimental, there are in fact positive features associated with this live Christmas tradition.

1. Growing Christmas trees can provide habitat for wildlife.
2. Christmas trees can remove dust and pollen from the air.
3. 93% of real Christmas tree consumers recycle their tree in community recycling programs or in their own backyard.
4. Recycled trees have been used to make sand and soil erosion barriers.
5. An acre of Christmas trees provides the daily oxygen requirements of 18 people.


Snoozebox the portable hotel

The new, redesigned Snoozebox portable hotel was officially unveiled in London on November 27. The mobile hotel will start to be rolled out to major UK and international events next year. In 2013, over 32,000 guests stayed with Snoozebox. Snoozebox is totally self-contained and does not require line power or flat terrain to be fully operational at almost any event or location around the world. With the benefit of being stackable, the accommodation takes up considerably less space than traditional cabins or large motorhomes, plus the simple, rapid build-up ensures minimal time and disruption on-site.

Now, biking around the city is getting even greener than just being car-free: a bike path in the suburbs of Amsterdam is getting a major solar makeover. The trail, which connects the small communities of Wormerveer and Krommenie, is the preferred route of approximately 2,000 local bicycle commuters each day. Local authorities have opted to replace 230’ of asphalt with solar panels to generate plenty of renewable energy. By 2016, the planners anticipate generating enough power to sustain three homes.

Though cycling will inevitably attract dirt to the solar surface thereby blocking some of the sunlight, they are designed to be self-cleaning. Tilted ever so slightly, the panels should allow rainwater to wash the dirt off the path. Because the path was originally laid out without considering the optimal positioning to have the most access to sunlight, the panels will only be able to produce about 70% of the energy that solar panels on typical roofs can create. That said, the government hopes to continue expanding the solar capacities on the trail to make it more effective.

If the plan sounds vaguely familiar, perhaps you’ve read about Solar Roadways, a project originated by Scott and Julie Brusaw. They’ve been busy advocating to turn roads and parking lots into solar panels. They claim that if all of the roads in the US were switched to solar panels, the country would be able to reduce its carbon emissions by 75%.

Despite being encased in glass that can withstand the weight of dropped steel balls, critics worry that the surface won’t survive the long-term wear and tear. Theoretically, the path should work out, but it remains theoretical until it is proven in practice. Thank goodness that the Netherlands is willing to foot the nearly $4 million bill on this ambitious project to test its feasibility.

Mathews, Kevin, Care2, "First Solar Panel Bike Path Planned in Amsterdam," enn.com/top_stories/article/47995, November 10, 2014

First Solar Panel Bike Path Planned in Amsterdam

As one of the biking capitals of the world, Amsterdam can already make a case for being a leader in the green movement. The city is not resting on its laurels, however.

First Solar Panel Bike Path Planned in Amsterdam

As one of the biking capitals of the world, Amsterdam can already make a case for being a leader in the green movement. The city is not resting on its laurels, however.
What could be better than LED lighting?

Even as the 2014 Nobel Prize in Physics has enshrined light-emitting diodes (LEDs) as the single most significant and disruptive energy-efficient lighting solution of today, scientists around the world continue unabated to search for the even-better-bulbs of tomorrow.

Electronics based on carbon, especially carbon nanotubes (CNTs), are emerging as successors to silicon for making semiconductor materials. And they may enable a new generation of brighter, low-power, low-cost lighting devices that could challenge the dominance of light-emitting diodes (LEDs) in the future and help meet society's ever-escalating demand for greener bulbs.

Scientists from Tohoku University in Japan have developed a new type of energy-efficient flat light source based on carbon nanotubes with very low power consumption of around 0.1 watt for every hour's operation—about a hundred times lower than that of an LED.

In the journal *Review of Scientific Instruments*, the researchers detail the fabrication and optimization of the device, which is based on a phosphor screen and single-walled carbon nanotubes as electrodes in a diode structure. You can think of it as a field of tungsten filaments shrunk to microscopic proportions.

They assembled the device from a liquid mixture containing highly crystalline single-walled carbon nanotubes dispersed in an organic solvent mixed with a soap-like chemical known as a surfactant. Then, they "painted" the mixture onto the positive electrode or cathode, and scratched the surface with sandpaper to form a light panel capable of producing a large, stable and homogenous emission current with low energy consumption.

http://www.enn.com/top_stories/article/47962

Lux Lighting Design receives 2014 Gold and Silver PRISM Awards

Doreen Le May Madden, LC, CLC, IES, owner and principal of ALLY MEMBER Lux Lighting Design, received both the Gold and Silver PRISM Awards from BRAGB (Builders and Remodelers Association of Greater Boston) for the Most Innovative Lighting Designs 2014. Projects are listed and pictured at bragb.org. See luxid.com to learn more.

Foli Looks to Digitally Deliver Hotel Newspapers + More

It used to be that having a newspaper dropped at a guestroom door was an essential amenity, especially for business travelers. Nowadays, with so many guests getting their news online, newspaper delivery just seems like a lot of money to spend for very little benefit. When you consider the hassle associated with buying physical papers, delivering them to each door, and getting rid of them later, then it makes sense to go digital.

Newspaper publishers are already going this route, developing smartphone and tablet apps that serve up all the news that's fit to print in an eye-pleasing format. But more and more newspapers are also setting up paywalls that allow users to read only a few articles for free, but only give full access to subscribers. If hotels want to provide guests with full access to big papers like the New York Times or the Wall Street Journal, they have to pay for the digital version as well.

Foli takes a different approach by offering a virtual newsstand within its iPad and iPhone app. The software uses geofencing technology to unlock each publication within a property's confines, which means no longer buying stacks of papers and recycling or tossing old ones. Hotel owners can even add their own content to the app, stocking it with local maps, amenity guides, and restaurant menus.

“We started with magazines for our platform, which consisted of a mobile app that served up newsstand titles like Vogue and People on hotel guests’ smartphones and tablets while
they were staying at a property,” says Foli Co-founder and CEO Henry He. “But this digital platform can be used for everything paper related.” He says that beyond stocking the app with magazines and newspapers, the company works with hotels to develop interactive versions of their promotional materials. “A hotel can add video, audio or slideshow content that showcases its spas or restaurants.”

The app can even be used by hotel concierges to recommend restaurants and other local attractions. “I think hotels have been basically trying to figure out a way to combine services and reduce cost, but at the same time create a good guest experience,” He says. If that means no more stacks of newspapers to deal with, then he could be on to something.

Downey, Sean, “Foli Looks to Digitally Deliver Hotel Newspapers,” Tech Buzz, Technology, September 18, 2014

Milk Byproduct Could Become New Flame Retardant

It sounds like it belongs in an April Fools edition, but recent research really suggests we could treat our fabrics with whey, replacing toxic chemicals. During cheese production, curds are separated from whey, and the whey is typically discharged into the wastewater management system. This abundant, cheap resource may have applications as a flame retardant.

Leave it to Italy to figure out that cheese making could produce a good alternative to flame retardants. It sounds hard to believe, but researchers at the Polytechnic University of Turin are serious and have promising test results to prove it. Think back to Miss Muffet and her curds and whey, and you may remember that whey is a byproduct of milk, often produced in the making of cheese. Whey contains proteins called caseins that researchers have found form a layer of char that blocks flames from spreading—similar to how some flame retardants function, but without the accompanying toxic compounds.

After treating fabrics in distilled water and casein powder, the researchers performed flammability tests. Only 14% of a cotton sample and 23% of a polyester cloth burned before the flames extinguished themselves. A cotton-polyester blend burned completely, but smoldered 60% more slowly than the untreated material.

According to researchers, one of the biggest challenges ahead is one anyone might expect: the cheese-treated fabrics stink. The next task for researchers is to attempt to remove the molecules associated with the odor as well as to develop a binder that ensures the treatment does not wash off. If successful, it wouldn’t be the first building product that makes use of whey, which otherwise requires intensive wastewater treatment: water-based floor finishes also use the dairy byproduct.


Drought Response

The recent California drought has some hotels turning off decorative water fountains and filling them with a mix of succulents, easy-care beauties which require very little water.

FINAL WORDS . . .

Most people who set New Year’s resolutions don’t follow through on them. Annual business goals often fall by the wayside as well. Among the best suggestions heard lately? Forget year-long resolutions and focus on 90-day goals. The reason 90-day goals fuel more growth than annual goals is that they allow you to pursue multiple growth opportunities at once.

successfulmeetings.com/Strategy/SM-How-To/How-to-Grow-Your-Business-Faster-This-Year/?cid=eltrHowTo, January 8, 2015