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Secure Space

By Rowland Stiteler

Safety is a significant concern for meeting planners these days, presenting a responsibility and a legal liability.

"If a planner sends meeting attendees to a hotel and something bad happens to those people as a result of going to that property, there's a liability to the planner," said John C. Fannin, president and CEO of Wilmington, Del. based SafePlace Corp.

"There's case law to that affect."

Fannin, a 30-year veteran of the industrial security, fire protection and health and life safety industry, recently began offering a free service for planners, the SafeMeetings program.

"Planners are not in the business of security and fire safety and can't go to a hotel and perform a professional safety inspection—but we can," said Fannin, whose company began evaluating and accrediting hotels last year. Hotels accredited by SafePlace undergo thorough site inspections and employee background checks.

"Hotels need to have safe facilities and appropriate security systems," Fannin said. "Employees must be screened and correctly trained in how to use the hotel security systems in order for the property to be certified by us."

Fannin says the program, which accredited its first meeting hotels last year, is getting mixed responses from major chains, but is being embraced by independents desiring to stand out from competitors.

As part of the SafeMeetingsSM program, SafePlace will provide planners with at least a cursory safety review of any hotels they are considering and assist planners in requesting full-fledged safety assessments.

"At the very least, we can provide fundamental information that will allow them to make decisions based on the facts," Fannin said.

For more information, visit www.safeplace.com.