



## The Chedi gets NHI's 'virus controls checked' certificate

During this unprecedented period of uncertainty for the hospitality sector across the Sultanate of Oman the Food Safety Academy at the National Hospitality Institute (NHI) has been continuing to work closely with their clients in the hotel, restaurant and food service sector providing specialist advice and support by assisting with the compilation of Internal Emergency Plans (Risk Assessments) for re-opening and operating under coronavirus disease (COVID-19) restrictions.

NHI's Food Safety Academy lead consultant and auditor, William Wood, who is also a director of specialist food safety consultancy SFBB Systems Ltd in the UK, believes environmental health practitioners have the necessary skills and disciplines to play a key role in assisting food and hospitality businesses to assess the risks brought about by COVID-19 and have the required infection control knowledge to help businesses establish safe ways of operating and to effectively manage the transmission and spread of the disease.

At the height of the lockdown period earlier this year the general manager of The Chedi Muscat, Morton Johnston, and his team began looking at ways of developing a safe re-opening plan. COVID-19 was, and still is,

unchartered territory. Specific industry guidance was not readily to hand and emerging COVID-19 regulatory requirements were making the whole process of re-opening and delivering hotel operations look like an almost impossible task. Managers across the hospitality sector were realising at the same time it was not immediately clear how, and when, re-opening could ever be possible, furthermore no one was sure whether the emerging new ways of operating were going to be acceptable to customers, be practical or in fact financially sustainable.

At the same time NHI, being unable to visit their clients face-to-face for normal auditing, HACCP development and training activities, were instead reaching out to the industry by delivering live webinars about the challenges being faced within the industry, the possible routes to recovery as well as hosting panels of experts to deliver some very well attended COVID-19 Questions & Answers sessions.

Wood says, "It was clear from these interactions with businesses that NHI needed to offer some additional help to our clients with the task of developing COVID-19 risk assessments and establishing a framework of mitigation controls. Businesses

needed to be able to provide the necessary assurance to regulatory authorities that they were able to operate within the law, were safe to re-open and equally as important provide confidence to their customers and staff that it was safe to return."

Having worked with The Chedi since 2015 as their independent third party food safety / HACCP auditor Wood was asked to work closely with The Chedi's appointed COVID-19 Responsible Persons from within the management team.

In direct consultation with Johnston and Deepak Sharma (director of Food & Beverage) a 12 Points to Safety Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Risk Assessment internal emergency action plan was developed for The Chedi by NHI. The document referenced the World Health Organization (WHO), Leading Hotels of the World (LHW) and international hotel and hospitality sector guidance and closely considered the Oman Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs controls for managing private sector establishments (Violations 1-20) to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

On September 16, NHI awarded the COVID-19 Controls Checked by NHI certificate to the hotel.