



Locked and loaded

Constantly evolving, hotel door locking systems increasingly link into the property's management systems to offer ever-greater connectivity, writes *Zara Horner*

VingCard Elsafe has recently launched Essence by VingCard, the first invisible electronic lock.

When is a lock not a lock? When it's on a hotel room, it would appear.

No longer content to simply prevent entry through a door, today's industrial locking systems also monitor, log, report, self-manage and connect.

This ever-increasing connectivity is also enabling guests to use smartphones and tablets to access their room.

Hemant Jolly is MD at UTC Building and Industrial Systems. "The increasing demand today is for multiple solutions from a single source with worldwide service and support," he says. "And Onity continues to respond to that."

Operating since 1941, Onity electronic locking solutions and energy management systems now can be found in more than 22,000 hotels in 200 hotel chains around the globe.

"From electronic locks and smart card systems, to electronic in-room safes and energy management systems, we are committed to providing customers with real solutions and reliable support," Jolly says.

Meeting international standards and designed and built to a high quality, Jolly says Onity systems "cover all the stages of providing electronic solutions and services."

For Indra Budiman, CEO of Hansar Hotels & Resorts, security was a top priority during the development, design and construction of the Hansar Samui Resort & Spa property on the Thai island of Samui.

"We have chosen an electronic door lock system which provides far better security than normal metal locking systems," he says.

The hotel's system has an alarm function, "which can be activated when the latches of the lock are maliciously operated or the door is not closed properly," Budiman explains.

"This was one of the main selling points to the system we have chosen as some brands do not have this feature."

The system Budiman chose also operates an elevator card system in the group's city property.

"This feature will restrict any unauthorised access. No one can reach the guest room floor without the key card. I know of some hotels which have a key card system for their main entrance after midnight. Some they use for the public toilet, too."

Hotel security generates a guest safety review report gathered on a monthly basis.

"This is based on any incident reports filed," Budiman says.

And it's so far, so good.

"It shows that to date we have zero incidents involving any missing items from any guest rooms, and no trespassing. Secondly, of course it's based on a guest satisfaction index, which shows zero complaints with the key card system that we have chosen."

The guest electronic keys are integrated with the hotel's PMS system, which Budiman says is considered "simply normal practice" now.

"It allows us control throughout the exact period of stay of each

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Onity electronic locking solutions and energy management systems are installed at more than 22,000 hotels in 200 hotel chains



Indra Budiman, CEO of Hansar Hotels & Resorts – security a top priority during the development, design and construction of the group properties

guest by following their individual bookings pattern. This is very important from a security point of view as it prevents unauthorised access to any specific area or room and gives us something to refer back to should the need arise.”

Keep it simple

Another purchasing criterion for Budiman, was ease of use, both for guests and hotel staff.

“The touchless door opening system is easy to use and understand, even for those unfamiliar with these systems. We can easily cancel any key, if, let’s say, the guest misplaces it. The old one will be voided from any key log entry. We can also easily verify any key card and identify which key card it is.”

Low maintenance and cost were also factors in the purchase. But it was important for Budiman that design and aesthetics were not compromised.

“The system had to blend with the design aesthetics of the hotel, yet function perfectly. A bulky design would certainly not fit with our design philosophy,” he says.

“Lastly, durability. Each product may fit with certain climates. However, being a beachfront property, we have to ensure the key lock can withstand the elements it is exposed to.”

Budiman goes on to mention that some “too sophisticated systems” have “nil back-up from their manufacturer and you end up with a daily disaster for any malfunction situation.”

So it is important staff undergo a pre-installation training programme so they have a level of understanding as well, he adds.

Lock down

For more than 150 years, Swiss company Kaba Lodging has focused on innovation and “ground-breaking solutions”, according to the company’s vice president international sales, John Sarrouf.

“It is about being a long-term partner to the hotel. Rather than being a supplier of technology, we have to be a partner who can deploy sophisticated systems and support them over time.

“We need to have the people, processes and tools in place and we need to have customer focus ingrained in the culture of our company.”

And he says that radio frequency identification (RFID) technology is the building block for the contactless experience in the hospitality sector to secure guest rooms.

“Apart from RFID, hotels are now opting for online solutions that enable programming and auditing of their electronic locks directly from the front desk. Through our Safflok brand, we have been pioneering online access control solutions for over a decade and are consistently at the cutting edge.

“Tablet computing, for instance, is making hotel operations more flexible, as key cards can now be created anywhere in the hotel. This allows front desk personnel to move around, welcoming guests individually and managing room access remotely.”

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The RFID technology utilised by Kaba Lodging's Saflok Quantum lock is the building block for the contactless experience in the hospitality sector to secure guest rooms, says the company



Hansar Samui Resort & Spa Samui's electronic door lock system has an alarm function which can be activated when the latches of the lock are maliciously operated or the door is not closed properly

New developments also include remote check-in, enabling guests to go directly to their rooms, bypassing the front desk.

"Such options include RFID loyalty key card programmes where member key cards can be used to access assigned rooms in any hotel worldwide within a specific hotel chain," Sarrouf points out.

"Gaining popularity is the mobile phone room key, which comes in a variety of forms, such as a time-sensitive audible tone or a near field communications (NFC) chip inside a smartphone that operates like a keycard when presented to the lock card reader. NFC mobile check-in is an emerging technology that is garnering a lot of interest in the hotel sector."

Energy management systems for room temperature control and smart rooms customised to the tastes of the individual guest are also becoming a popular feature of high-end hotel guest rooms, and Kaba research and development is working alongside their partners to ensure systems that work, says Sarrouf.

"We can offer all of these services and features in addition to our standard locks and systems."

Looking good

It is also important that Kaba locks complement any existing hotel décor.

"We combine functionality with attractive design," Sarrouf says. "With Kaba locks hoteliers can rest assured their existing aesthetics are preserved, while also benefitting from the latest and greatest technology."

For VingCard Elsafe director marketing and communication, Ivan Aramayo, high standards are the thing.

Installed in more than 42,000 properties worldwide, "VingCard Elsafe has more than 30 years' experience in hotel security solutions," says Aramayo.

"We make sure that our products and solutions not only provide the highest standards in security but are also designed with the users in mind when it comes to software user interface and integration with other management systems at the hotel.

"It's important that VingCard Elsafe solutions seamlessly integrate with other hotel systems and we make sure that the software is easy to use by hotel staff."

Latest developments in hotel security solutions come from different angles, Aramayo points out.

He cites an example: "The integration of hotel locks into an online platform that can be either wireless, online or wired online through Power Over Ethernet (PoE) so that the hotel can manage the locks in the property remotely.

"Also, the trend is to integrate more elements of the room into the same online platform, for example the safes, energy management solutions, etc."

To address this trend, VingCard Elsafe is offering an entire package of electronic locks, safes and Orion management solutions integrated into the same online platform.

Another area where the industry is evolving is towards making the electronic solutions as minimalistic as possible in terms of existing visible hardware on the door, Aramayo says.

"In that respect, VingCard Elsafe has recently launched Essence by VingCard, the first 'invisible' electronic lock.

"And Allure by VingCard, a new concept where the reader is located on the wall with a fully secured mechanical locking solution that can also integrate with other smart guestroom solutions such as 'make up room' and 'do not disturb' functions within the same panel." **AHCT**