

directing council



PAN AMERICAN
SANITARY
ORGANIZATION

IX Meeting

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WORLD
HEALTH
ORGANIZATION



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Topic 24: SANITARY REGULATIONS FOR HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS

(Topic proposed by the Government of Costa Rica)

Background

In proposing the above topic for inclusion on the agenda of the Directing Council, the Government of Costa Rica recognized that the study of sanitary regulations for hotels and restaurants with a special view to the health protection of international travellers is, in fact, only one phase of the general environmental sanitation problems of the various countries. However, without neglecting the over-all activities of sanitation, to which attention is given in the programs of the governments and in the collaboration rendered by the Organization, the need has been stressed to devote special attention to this specific phase.

In practically all countries of the Hemisphere there is increasing interest and activity in connection with the sanitation improvements at international ports, at hotels, restaurants, and resort areas, and on planes, ships, and trains serving the travelling public. It is being recognized by the health officials of the Member States that the travelling public is more vulnerable than the local population to many health hazards associated with deficient sanitation of restaurants, hotels, and similar places and facilities used primarily by the travellers; and that, in addition to national and international standards of sanitation that will be applied to these places as a part of the general public health improvements, more immediate attention should be given to the sanitation of such travel centers. The risk of disease as a result of poor sanitation may be a powerful deterrent to the potential visitor coming to the country for business or recreation. Some countries value the visits of such international travellers as a considerable source of income to the nation each year. Such income is worth conserving and can help finance many needed public health improvements.

The Organization has recently assumed direct participation in the formulation of standards of sanitation applicable to hotels, restaurants,

and similar facilities as the result of a request presented, through the Organization of American States, by the Inter-American Travel Congress. The action taken recently by the interested agencies is described in this report.

Inter-American Travel Congress

The Technical Committee on Travel Plant of the Inter-American Travel Congresses, at a meeting in Washington, 12-15 December 1955, adopted a resolution stressing the importance of protecting the health of travellers and urging special consideration by the Sixth Inter-American Travel Congress of health and sanitary conditions in hotels and restaurants. It emphasized also the interest of national tourist promotion agencies in the adoption and maintenance of proper health and sanitary standards, and invited the national public health services of the American republics and interested nongovernmental organizations to submit suggestions on the subject.

The Sixth Inter-American Travel Congress, meeting in San José, Costa Rica, 14-21 April 1956, adopted a special resolution on "Minimum Sanitation Standards for Tourist Accommodations" (Resolution XXXI), which emphasized the importance of sanitary conditions and particularly of water supply and food handling in tourist accommodations in connection with a successful development of tourism; and called for appropriate action by national public health services, tourist promotion agencies, and hotel associations. In paragraph 4 the Congress resolved:

"4. To request the Organization of American States to invite the Pan American Sanitary Bureau to appoint a technical committee, composed of experts in the field and representatives of the Inter-American Travel Congresses, the latter to be selected by the Permanent Executive Committee, to prepare a set of minimum sanitation standards applicable to tourist accommodations."

In accordance with this resolution, the Organization of American States, on 4 June 1956, transmitted to the Director of the PASB a letter officially requesting the establishment of the technical committee. In the Director's reply to this request, the OAS was asked to indicate the representatives of the Travel Congresses who would serve on this committee.

Inter-American Association of Sanitary Engineering

The V Inter-American Sanitary Engineering Congress, in Lima, Peru, 19-25 March 1956, discussed the subject of sanitation and tourist travel and adopted a resolution calling attention to the economic importance of tourism and of illness suffered by tourists as a result of inadequate sanitation of tourist centers and transport facilities, and recommending appropriate activity by the governments, by the Sixth Inter-American Travel Congress, and by the World Health Organization.

WHO and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

At the sixth meeting of a special committee to consider the International Sanitary Regulations, set up by the Third World Health Assembly, attention was drawn to the embarrassment and delays to commercial aviation that tend to grow from insanitary conditions. On this committee's recommendation, and after later consideration and discussion by ICAO and the World Health Assembly and the Executive Board, the Joint ICAO/WHO Expert Committee on the Hygiene and Sanitation of Airports was established to prepare a list of recommended sanitation standards to serve as a guide to Member States in the operation of airports open to international traffic. A draft of this manual has been prepared by a special consultant to WHO and has been under study by a selected group of experts in various parts of the world, by the Committee on International Quarantine, and by the PASB.

Action Taken

In accordance with the official request received from the Organization of American States, the Director has appointed a Technical Committee of Experts consisting of the Chief of the Environmental Sanitation Branch, PASB, the Chief of the Sanitary Engineering Division, U. S. Public Health Service, and representatives of the Inter-American Travel Congresses, the latter selected by the Permanent Executive Committee of the Congresses, to study the question and to prepare a manual containing standards of sanitation applicable to establishments and facilities catering to international travelers. The Technical Committee will request the opinion and recommendations of the public health authorities of countries especially interested in the tourist traffic. This Committee is coordinating its activities as far as possible with those of the Joint ICAO/WHO Expert Committee dealing with the matter of international airport sanitation.