

## Modular bed allows hoteliers to swap out damaged sections

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GARDEN GROVE, CA—The bed is the centerpiece of the hotel guestroom. For business and transient travelers alike, it is the place where they will spend a vast majority of their time while inside the room.

But, accidents do happen, whether a stain on the mattress cover or damage to the sidewall.

These incidents would usually cause irreparable harm that forces a hotel to replace the entire bed, sending it off to the garbage dump or the recycling center. Waiting for a replacement—if the unit is not in storage somewhere and taking up valuable space on the property—could take a day or two, which would eliminate any chance of the room being filled. Lost occupancy, delivery of a new bed and recycling/



Tony Hochschild  
Sterling Sleep Systems

garbage dump fees would affect the hotel's bottom line—and would also put a strain on the environment.

Sterling Sleep Systems, based here, has designed a modular bed where individual components, such as the sidewall assemblies, foam overlays and mattress-top panels, can not only be ordered and replaced, but also interchanged, therefore extending the life of the bed and limiting the impact on the planet.

“The primary benefits shared by all of our sustainable beds are a 50% reduction in the cost of bed ownership through extending product life by two to three times, and preventing half of the solid waste normally generated by old hotel mattresses,” said Tony Hochschild, owner and president of Sterling Sleep Systems. “If you look at the total cost of ownership, you will save a lot. Every time you change beds, you have to remove the old beds before installing the new ones, and then you have to haul the old beds someplace. Someone is going to get paid to remove these things and, most of the time, there is a disposal fee at the dump.

“Then, there's the room downtime,” he continued. “How long is the room out of commission? Are you good enough to change them all out in one day, maybe two days? When you can replace a foam overlay and a cover in the room and have the same impact as going through the other way, it's pretty appealing.”

The mattresses come in three styles: plush, pillow and Euro top. All three come with 2-in. reflex foam top layers, while the Euro top adds a choice of 2 in.



Components of the Sterling modular bed, such as the mattress topper, can be individually replaced if damaged.

or 3 in. divided plush memory foam or firm latex foam overlays. Also available is a Euro-top version where individual firmness can be adjusted. Five 3-in. overlays are used: one plush Reflex foam full-length header goes where the guests rest their heads, while two extra-firm latex and two plush memory foam overlays can be configured based on the desired comfort level of each sleeper.

“You have the plush memory foam or the extra-firm latex that can be placed in the middle of the bed. What you put there pretty much determines whether it feels soft or firm to you,” said Hochschild. “You would find it hard to believe that it is as simple as that, but it really works.”

Hotels seeking LEED certification can earn two LEED points by turning to the sustainable bed—one for its 95% recycled-steel pocketed coils and the other for modular design with replaceable wear components, according to the company.

The beds also come completely apart so that they can be cleaned inside and out by the housekeeping staff, which makes rooms available faster and lowers maintenance costs.

As an example of the mattress system's impact on cost savings and the environment, Hochschild cited the Gansevoort Turks & Caicos. In 2010,

the boutique property replaced 107 mattresses with Sterling's sustainable mattress system. Five years later, when the resort would normally have had to replace conventional mattresses, it only had to replace 77 quilted mattress covers to restore the original mattresses to like-new condition. This kept 77 mattress sets from being supplanted, and prevented more than 4,300 cubic ft. of solid waste from going to the landfill.

The beds start at \$420 for queen and go up into the low \$800s. The most popular set, according to the executive, is a \$585 queen that can be delivered to 11 Western states.

Hochschild believes that the cost is justifiable, especially on the environmental level. “The primary way to reduce solid waste and conserve energy is not to use it in the first place. If you can extend the product life cycle two or three times, you have done a very good thing in terms of preventing solid waste,” he said. “Philosophically speaking, I would rather sell one high-quality sustainable mattress and a few replacement parts than three typical, disposable hotel mattresses.” **HB**

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