



Hotel workers union, meeting planners to share info

LOS ANGELES, June 28 (Reuters) - The union representing North American hotel workers announced on Wednesday the formation of an organization designed to share information on hotel labor practices with meeting planners.

"We've discovered that it is not only workers who are challenged by global hotel companies, but their customers who are challenged as well," John Wilhelm, president of the Unite Here union's hospitality division, said on a conference call.

He said group meetings account for about a third of business at companies like Hilton Hotels Corp. (HLT.N: Quote, Profile, Research), Marriott International Inc. (MAR.N: Quote, Profile, Research) and Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide Inc. (HOT.N: Quote, Profile, Research), but planners are often unaware of labor issues at individual properties.

A spokeswoman for Hilton declined to comment on the program's launch, while officials at Marriott and Starwood were not immediately available for comment.

"There is tremendous interest in how these companies are treating their employees," Wilhelm said.

The union, which is in the midst of a campaign to improve labor contracts and boost membership, said it will provide information on hotel labor issues to **the Informed Meetings Exchange, which currently has more than 100 subscribers, including groups like the National Association of Colored People and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force.**

Goals of the clearinghouse include helping groups to patronize hotels that best reflect their values and crafting contract language that would protect them in the event of a labor action or other problem, Wilhelm said.