



Visa Crunch Could Mean Summer Worker Shortage

Hotels Have Difficulty Finding Temporary Workers

April 9, 2004

HAMPTON BEACH, N.H. -- Seasonal businesses around the state are worried that a visa cap could leave them short-staffed this summer.

Many summer businesses rely on students from other countries to help them handle summer crowds. But U.S. immigration officials have cut off applications for temporary visas early this year due to increased security. So far, about 12 workers who wanted to work at the Royal Crest hotel have been denied.

"They keep your room clean, keep the pool situated, help the customers with what they need," Royal Crest manager Dana Anderson said.

Temporary visas are a possible option for local business owners who say they can't find enough seasonal workers.

"The other part of it is, American schools don't get out as early as schools in Europe," said Mike Roy, of Atlantic Motel.

The program known as H2B is usually a last resort for employers across the United States. New Hampshire tourism officials said businesses will be short hundreds of employees.

"That's important, because it's recognized that people will tell other people that the service has been good, the lodging has been good, and people will come back," said Doc Noel, of the Hampton Area Chamber of Commerce.

State lawmakers are now sponsoring bills to raise the cap and exempt some returning workers.

"If we don't get it, we're going to be struggling pretty hard," Royal Crest Assistant General Manager Mike Ezell said.

Employers said they hope they can find some way to carry the extra load.