

Roof fire at Mystic Lake Casino forces partial evacuation - Minneapolis Star Tribune

Written by Administrator

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Fire broke out at Mystic Lake Casino in an area closed for remodeling, prompting a partial evacuation of the gambling area Thursday morning, Mdewakanton Sioux tribal officials said.

No one was injured but about 100 people were evacuated from the casino area nearest the fire, officials said.

Irene Weingartz, of Mankato, was one of those evacuated, but not too quickly.

"I had a \$110 bonus on my machine," she boasted. "I said, 'I'm not moving until I cash out.'"

The official urging her to move along gave her time to collect her winnings. She then moved to another slot machine in the open part of the casino, but it wasn't as lucky, she said.

A faint odor of smoke circulated in the casino by 11 a.m., when more than 100 people had lined up for the 2-for-1 brunch deal.

"It was hazy over there" in the closed area, said Paul Kicksey, 64, of Savage. "I came for the brunch. The place is half shut down. I've never seen it like this."

The fire started about 9:30 a.m. when a welder was cutting steel and a spark flew up into nearby foam insulation just under the roof, said casino vice president Bryan Prettyman.

Construction workers grabbed fire extinguishers but could not contain the fire. For a while, two fire trucks with booms worked the fire. Firefighters had to cut a hole in the roof to put out the fire, Prettyman said.

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A witness said shortly after 10 a.m. that he could see flames shooting from the roof of the casino.

"It looks like they are getting the flames under control right now," said Brad Bakke, of Edina, a motorist who was driving by. "It's still smoking good."

Firefighters from Shakopee, Prior Lake and Mdewakanton Emergency Services responded and had the fire under control by about 10:45 a.m., said tribe emergency services director Jim Muelken. The driveway iced up near fire trucks from draining hose water in sub-zero wind chill temperatures.

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