

Patrons keep gambling as casinos prepare for coronavirus pandemic

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 12 March 2020 17:03 -

Rivers Casino Pittsburgh regular Sandra Painter has little concern about the coronavirus.

Painter said she gambles at the casino about three times a week. The Mt. Washington resident will continue to visit unless younger and otherwise healthy people start getting infected with the coronavirus known as covid-19.

“I think it’s overhyped,” said Painter, 57, as she made her way into Rivers on Thursday from the parking garage. “If you’re healthy and you wash your hands and you take precautions, you’re just as safe as if you catch the flu. It’s the same thing.”

The Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board is advising casinos to follow guidelines established by health care organizations as concerns about covid-19 continue to grow.

There are 12 casinos in the state. Control board spokesman Richard McGarvey said the board has been talking to casino officials on a regular basis to make sure they stay up to date on recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the state and local health departments.

“The board is concerned about it and the whole situation. And that’s why we’ve been reaching out to the casinos constantly saying, ‘Are you doing the right things there? Are you following all the guidelines?’” McGarvey said Thursday. “The board really is saying, ‘Make sure you’re doing what’s recommended by those that are in the know: the medical professionals in public health.’”

McGarvey said Thursday evening that the Valley Forge Casino and Resort in Montgomery County informed the state that it is closing temporarily at 6 a.m. Friday. The confirmed and suspected coronavirus cases are clustered in the eastern part of the state.

The other 11 casinos in the state remain open without restrictions, McGarvey said. Casinos in Southwestern Pennsylvania include The Meadows in Washington County, The Rivers, and Lady Luck Casino Nemacolin at Nemacolin Woodlands Resort in Fayette County.

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Rivers Casino, on Pittsburgh's North Shore, seemed to be operating as usual Thursday. People walked in and out of the building and played slot machines on the game floor.

"Along with our community and the entire country, we're actively monitoring the situation and adjusting our plans, policies and operating procedures as new information becomes available," the casino said in a statement. "The health and well-being of our Team Members and guests is our highest priority."

Lady Luck Casino also issued a statement: "We have activated an internal task force to monitor, maintain and update, as necessary, any relevant procedures or policies. We urge our guests planning to attend any functions or events to check with the event organizers for updated event information."

The Meadows didn't immediately respond to requests for comment Thursday.

Jim Kaltreider and his wife, Ann, were at the Rivers Casino on Thursday. They're retired and go there a couple of times a week.

Jim Kaltreider said he's not too concerned about covid-19. The only way he would consider not going to the casino is if the virus is reported in Pittsburgh.

"I don't even worry about that. If it comes, it comes. Nothing you can do about it," said Kaltreider, 70, of West View. "I'm not going to disrupt my life. The whole thing is just plain stupid."

Painter, a nurse for special needs children, said she thinks people should maintain proper hygiene and avoid crowded spaces to stay healthy.

"I wouldn't go and fly," said Painter, who also worked at a nursing home for 10 years. "I wouldn't go on a cruise ship right now. I would avoid that."

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