

Hard Rock Casino Boss Says Return To Normal May Take At Least A Year

Written by Administrator
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The head of Hard Rock International – which runs the [Seminole Hard Rock Hotel and Casino](#) in Tampa – thinks it's going to take at least a year until his company's business gets back to normal.

Jim Allen is Chairman and CEO of the Seminole Tribe of Florida's gaming company.

He [told CNBC](#) Wednesday that they're looking forward to reopening their hotels, casinos, and restaurants after COVID-19 forced them to shut down. Hard Rock owns properties in 76 countries worldwide.

“As we look to the future, we’re starting to see a little bit of daylight, and we’re hopeful that as we get towards the end of May and into June, that we’ll start seeing the opening many of our locations on a global basis,” said Allen.

Allen said some people get excited when things like beaches reopen, but he acknowledged that customers are likely going to be shy about visiting hotels and casinos any time soon.

“While we see a ramp up, when we see the beaches in Jacksonville as crowded as they were, that seems like that’s kind of exciting, but I think that’s just the initial get-out-of-the-house, if you will,” he said. “I think there's going to be a real challenge, especially here in the United States, as far as ramping the business back up, and frankly, we're planning on that taking at least a year.”

Allen pointed to one of their Chinese properties as an example of people’s reluctance. The Shenzhen Hotel reopened about a month ago; Allen said current occupancy is at only 12 percent.

Allen also said they’re looking at protective methods they’ll take when they reopen. They’ll also adjust them according to state, local or national guidelines.

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“From a casino standpoint, we learned a lot the last 30 days we were open. We were already doing much more than social distancing,” said Allen. “One slot machine was on, four were off. We were only allowing three individuals at a gaming table.”

Going forward, Allen said they’ll likely use thermal imaging and temperature checks for customers and employees to make sure everyone is safe.

“That may come at an additional cost, and I think that’s just unfortunately part of this pandemic that we have to navigate through,” he said.

Hard Rock [came under fire](#) for keeping its Seminole locations in Florida open in March for days after other businesses had shut down. At the time, company officials said they wanted to protect the livelihood of their nearly 14,000 employees without jeopardizing public safety.

They [finally closed](#) on March 20.

Allen said they've re-extended benefits to employees through June and are offering additional assistance, including giving gift cards for groceries every other week to workers making less than \$50,000 a year.

“This is something that’s a real challenge and we think it’s important to make sure we keep our staff as safe as possible as we start to slowly think about re-opening.”

Read more <https://wusfnews.wusf.usf.edu/post/hard-rock-casino-boss-says-return-normal-may-take-least-year>