

Vegas, baby! Casinos reopen after long coronavirus closure

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 04 June 2020 17:17 -

By

KEN RITTER Associated Press

June 4, 2020, 9:00 PM

4 min read

4 min read

[Share to Facebook](#)[Email this article](#)

LAS VEGAS -- Mask use was spotty among customers as casinos in Las Vegas and throughout Nevada reopened Thursday for the first time since March following a closure to prevent the spread of the coronavirus.

"Wash your hands while saying, 'Vegas Baby!' 20 times," a video marquee cheered on the neon-lit Las Vegas Strip.

Hotel-casinos in downtown and suburban Las Vegas were first to open right after midnight. Several dozen people waited at the high-rise D Hotel and Casino on Fremont Street to have their temperatures checked at the door. The casino quickly filled with revelers and gamblers while a bartender danced, wearing lingerie and a surgical mask.

Las Vegas Strip casinos opened hours later in a nod to recent nighttime protests over the death of George Floyd, some of which turned violent. A Las Vegas police officer remains hospitalized after being shot in the head late Monday during a protest on the Strip, and a man who authorities say was armed with several guns was shot and killed the same night outside downtown federal buildings.

Jeff Hwang, a gambling enthusiast, author and blogger, began a trek at midnight to visit every casino in town that was scheduled to reopen.

Vegas, baby! Casinos reopen after long coronavirus closure

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 04 June 2020 17:17 -

Employees wore masks, but not many customers, at about a dozen places Hwang said he stopped before going to the Treasure Island casino, which opened quietly about 9 a.m. with seats removed to limit players at table games and slot machines. The few people entering found no greeters at the door and no temperature checks.

State gambling regulators, citing guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, required resorts to provide temperature screenings for hotel guests, but not casino patrons. Employees can be required to wear facial coverings, and customers were encouraged to do so.

Hwang said he was given face coverings earlier, including one with a Golden Gate logo at the city's oldest existing downtown casino. "Walking around, not many people were using them," he observed. "Just employees."

The iconic Bellagio fountain came alive at 10 a.m. with few people watching. Several nearby resorts also opened, including Wynn and Encore, the Venetian with its gondoliers, Caesars Palace and the Flamingo. MGM Grand opened an hour later, along with New York-New York.

Convention halls, nightclubs, swimming pool parties and arena spectacles remain dark.

Mike Gebhardt a utility worker from Cincinnati, flew to Las Vegas on a surprisingly full flight Thursday morning with his sister and her fiance for his birthday trip. He was looking forward to letting loose and playing blackjack.

"It's going to be a little different, but that's the way things are now," said Gebhardt.

In board rooms and government offices there are big hopes for recovery from an unprecedented and expensive shutdown.

"Our customers are coming to get away. Just for a little while," Wynn Resorts chief executive

Vegas, baby! Casinos reopen after long coronavirus closure

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 04 June 2020 17:17 -

Matt Maddox told employees in a video pep talk. "People need a break and we should offer it to them. With a smile and with dignity and with respect."

Property owners, state regulators and Democratic Gov. Steve Sisolak, are balancing [health](#) concerns against the loss of billions of dollars a month in gambling revenue and state unemployment that topped 28% during an idled April.

They're betting that safety measures including hand sanitizers and reminders for people to keep 6 feet (1.8 meters) apart will prevent a spike in COVID-19 cases. State [health](#) officials reported Thursday that more than 9,000 people have tested positive for COVID-19 in Nevada, and 429 have died.

For most people, the virus causes mild or moderate symptoms that clear up in two to three weeks. Older adults and people with existing health problems can face severe illness and death. The vast majority of people recover.

Recovery from the recession took years — reaching best-ever numbers last January and February, when taxable casino winnings topped \$1 billion each month and unemployment was at an all-time low 3.6%.

Casino resorts closed March 17. By April, unemployment reached 28.2%, topping figures in any state even during the Great Depression. Casino winnings were near zero.

Alan Feldman, a longtime casino executive who is now a fellow at the International Gaming Institute at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, called reopening an extremely important moment. "This is going to be a pretty long, slow climb," he said.

Associated Press writer Michelle Price and photographer John Locher contributed to this

Vegas, baby! Casinos reopen after long coronavirus closure

Written by Administrator

Thursday, 04 June 2020 17:17 -

report.

Read more <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory/las-vegas-reopening-coronavirus-casino-closure-71060678>