

Get Ready For The Return Of Slots As Colorado's Casinos Are Set To Reopen

Written by Administrator
Saturday, 13 June 2020 06:00 -

Gamblers are about to play the slots in Colorado's casinos for the first time since the coronavirus pandemic shut them down in March.

In Cripple Creek, known for gold mining and gambling, the casinos expect big crowds, according to Jeff Mosher, Cripple Creek's marketing and events director. The city has fielded inquiries from Oklahoma, Texas and Nebraska about when the gambling houses will reopen, he said.

"We're going to be packed — no ifs ands or buts," Mosher said.

Casino operators got the [go-ahead from state and local health officials](#) for a partial reopening. Patrons can play the slot machines, but table games remain closed indefinitely. Health officials expect to revisit table gaming in three weeks.

In Teller County, home to Cripple Creek, the casinos will open June 15. Casinos in Gilpin County, the state's biggest gambling hub, will open 2 days later. The smaller casinos were ready to open right away, but the larger operators in Black Hawk needed a few extra days to prepare, according to Rob Engels, a Gilpin County commissioner.

The county is wary of overcrowding after seeing scenes in other areas of the country that have reopened casinos.

"We know that there is pent-up demand," Engels said. "We didn't want to be in a situation where our smaller casinos were open for a couple of days and they were completely overrun and didn't have the capacity to handle all of the people who wanted to come up and gamble."

Familiar social distancing measures are in place. Players will be spaced six feet apart, and operators ask that customers wear masks. Casinos will be running at roughly 50 percent capacity.

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At Blackhawk's Monarch Casino, new sensors are being installed to control crowds, according to David Farahi, the casino's COO. Monarch has already deployed the sensors in Reno, Nevada, he said. There will be extensive training for employees.

"We're going to teach them all the new protocols," Farahi said. "We're going to be testing all of our team members for COVID-19 so we can make sure if anyone's positive they can properly quarantine themselves."

It's more difficult to practice social distancing for table games like blackjack and poker. People typically sit close together. There's a lot of handling of cards and chips by dealers and players, said Cripple Creek's Mosher. It's a tricky activity to control, he said.

"You've got dice that people are blowing on and kissing and things like that, whatever the superstition of the player is," Mosher said. "You've got some peculiar behaviors."

Until then, Coloradans with a gambling itch can scratch it one of the slot machines that make up the majority of the casino revenue earned in the state.

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