

State regulators expect casino crowds to return with 24-hour operations

Written by Administrator
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MGM Springfield, Encore Boston Harbor and Plainridge Park [casinos](#) are still not drawing big enough crowds to bump up against the state's 25% capacity limit.

But Bruce Band, assistant director and gaming agents division chief for the Massachusetts Gaming Commission, said Thursday he expects crowds to grow as the state's three resort style casino's [resume 24-hour-a-day operation](#).

He said three hours between 9 p.m. and midnight are prime gambling hours.

"I think you'll see the numbers up quite a bit," he said during the state Gaming Commission regular January meeting Thursday. "Especially this weekend."

In the last month, MGM Springfield's highest occupancy was 18%, Encore 17% and Plainridge 18.5%, Band said.

MGM Springfield returns to 24-hour operation on Friday. Encore and Plainridge both returned to 24-hour operation Wednesday.

Gov. Charlie Baker imposed a 9:30 p.m. [curfew](#) on most businesses in December and lifted the restriction as of Monday.

Band — giving his regular monthly report — said the casinos are recalling furloughed workers to staff up, citing Encore's recall of 500 employees.

He didn't give a number for MGM Springfield or Plainridge.

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Encore said it would furlough between 600 and 1,000 employees after the curfew [was announced.](#)

MGM Springfield laid off an additional [250 employees in November](#) .

Encore will reopen restaurants and its spa, Band said. MGM will keep its South End Market food court operating but won't open additional restaurants until the reopening process moves further along, Band said.

The 25% occupancy limit is in place until at least Feb. 8, Commissioners were told Thursday.

The state also bans food on the gaming floor and won't let patrons move around with drinks. They must be seated at a gaming station to drink.

MGM Springfield has instituted a [seven-point safety plan](#) , which includes employee health checks, mask requirements, social distancing, enhanced sanitation and air quality controls.

Business at MGM Springfield and the other two resort [casinos](#) recovered in December, generating about \$50 million in gross gaming revenue in December 2020. The three casinos reported about \$45 million in gross gambling revenue for the month of November.

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