

Borgata to Go Smoke-Free On Casino Floor

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ATLANTIC CITY - Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa plans to ban smoking on the casino floor, but its upscale surroundings will not be completely free of cigar or cigarette smoke.

The Las Vegas-style megaresort announced Friday evening that it will set aside special nongaming smoking lounges to comply with Atlantic City's partial smoking ban.

Under a law that took effect April 15, smoking is prohibited on 75 percent of the casino floor. Casinos must build enclosed smoking rooms equipped with separate ventilation systems if they allow smoking in the remaining 25 percent of the gaming space.

However, they also have the option of building smoking lounges that contain no slot machines or gaming tables. Borgata will join with six other Atlantic City casinos that will limit smoking to the nongaming lounges.

Borgata waited until 6 p.m. Friday to announce its smoking plans. Today is the deadline for casinos to submit plans with the New Jersey Department of Community Affairs describing their smoking rooms or lounges.

The 10 other casinos in town revealed their plans earlier in the week. For a while, speculation had been building that Borgata, a trendsetter in entertainment and marketing, might break from the pack and go completely smoke-free.

Instead, Borgata said it will reconfigure its casino floor to create nongaming smoking lounges. It did not disclose how many lounges it will have or how much they will cost to build.

"Given the circumstances, Borgata feels this plan will serve the best interests of its shareholders, customers and associates," the casino said in a brief statement.

Like Borgata, Trump Plaza Hotel and Casino, Tropicana Casino and Resort and the four Harrah's Entertainment Inc. properties - Harrah's, Bally's, Caesars and Showboat Casino Hotel - will allow smoking only in nongaming lounges.

Trump Taj Mahal Casino Resort and Trump Marina Hotel Casino, though, will build smoking rooms on their casino floors.

The Atlantic City Hilton Casino Resort and sister property Resorts Atlantic City plan to have nongambling smoking lounges as well as smoking rooms on the casino floor.

Once the Department of Community Affairs approves the plans, the casinos have 90 days to begin building the smoking rooms or lounges and must complete them "expeditiously." It is anticipated it will take state officials as long as eight weeks to review the plans.