

Atlantic City Casinos Pin Their Hopes On Fourth Of July Reopening

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- **Loss of summer revenue could force some Atlantic City casinos out of business**
- **Casino reopenings ‘tough nut to crack,’ insists New Jersey governor**
- **Pennsylvania reopens two casinos, with third follow on Friday**

Already devastated by a three-month lockdown because of the coronavirus pandemic, Atlantic City’s casinos still do not know if they will be open for business by the Fourth of July holiday weekend.

July and August are the peak revenue months for casinos in Atlantic City, and if they remain closed during those two months, at least one or two of the nine casinos may be forced to close permanently, sources said.

As casinos in [other states](#) continue to reopen, New Jersey Governor Phil Murphy still has yet to set a date for Atlantic City casinos to resume operations.

“Casinos are a tough nut. It’s incredibly important, but it’s one we’ve got to get right,” Murphy said during a briefing last month.

“We’re just not there yet,” the governor said.

[Jeremy Kleiman](#), a gaming attorney with the Saiber Law in Florham Park, New Jersey, said it is understandable why the governor is being so cautious.

“New Jersey has been hit hardest, apart from New York (by the pandemic),” Kleiman said.

“We have over 12,000 deaths. He is being guided by the numbers. Next week, restaurants are opening up for outdoor dining and recreational sports will be allowed. But it is slow going.”

The governor rejected calls to open the Atlantic City casinos as [early as May 1](#), and continued to resist when pressure increased to open them by the Memorial Day weekend three weeks later.

Murphy has said he would like to see the casinos reopen by the Fourth of July, but he has made no guarantees.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania, which neighbors New Jersey and is perhaps its most competitive rival in the East Coast gaming market, reopened two of its 12 casinos on Tuesday.

Rivers Casino in Pittsburgh opened Tuesday morning, followed later in the day by Meadows Casino in Washington, Pennsylvania.

A third Pennsylvania casino, Lady Luck Casino Nemaquin in Farmington, is scheduled to open on Friday.

Pennsylvania casinos have formulated individual reopening plans based on minimum standards set by the [Pennsylvania Gaming Control Board](#), according to Doug Harbach, the board’s communications director.

Staff from the board’s Bureau of Casino Compliance are at the reopened casinos to monitor activities, Harbach said.

“All three of the casinos’ operators permitted to reopen this week have additional casinos properties in Pennsylvania, so they certainly will use similar protocols while monitoring what is working best and what might need to be somewhat altered,” Harbach said.

Sources said Atlantic City casinos probably will need at least two weeks to prepare their properties and employees before reopening.

In that case, the governor would need to approve a reopening by the end of next week in order for the casinos to be ready by Friday, July 3.

Some Atlantic City casinos already are preparing, including Resorts Casino Hotel, which unveiled a “Work Safe, Play Safe” plan on June 5.

The Resorts plan calls for ultraviolet lights to disinfect high-traffic areas and a bipolar ionization system to purify the air, according to the Atlantic City Press.

The New Jersey Division of Gaming Enforcement, Unite Here Local 54 and AtlantiCare, a local health care

organization, are coordinating to develop an “operational best practices” plan for the casinos.

Before the pandemic, the longest shutdown for Atlantic City casinos had been five days in the fall of 2012 because of Hurricane Sandy.

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