

Atlantic City's newest casino opening April 2

3:45 PM, Feb. 13, 2012 |

Written by **Associated Press**

ATLANTIC CITY — Atlantic City's newest casino, Revel, is opening six weeks earlier than planned — on April 2 — and will be virtually smoke free throughout the premises.

That will mark the first time in the 34-year history of legalized gambling in the city that a casino has prohibited smoking without being forced to.

The casino, Atlantic City's 12th, will have a full-blown grand opening ceremony on May 25, but guests will be able to gamble and check into hotel rooms on April 2. Revel will start taking reservations online at its website, revelresorts.com, starting March 5.

Revel, a \$2.4 billion resort, is widely being counted on to help revive the sagging fortunes of the nation's second-largest gambling market after Las Vegas.

"I think this is going to be a very good summer for the city," Revel CEO Kevin DeSanctis said. "There will be no lack of things to do."

As promised since plans were unveiled in 2007, Revel will ban smoking on the entire casino floor, in guest rooms and in virtually all indoor and outdoor areas of the casino-hotel complex. The sole exception will be a small area outside a nightclub where club patrons will be allowed to light up. No one will have to walk through that area to get anywhere else in the resort, DeSanctis said.

He said he was somewhat concerned about being the first Atlantic City smoke-free facility but decided the current city policy permitting smoking on 25 percent of the casino floor is difficult to enforce.

"We just took the plunge," he said.

That stance was instantly applauded by Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy, which has been fighting for five years for smoke-free casinos in Atlantic City.

"Who wants to be around secondhand smoke?" asked Karen Blumenfeld, the group's executive director. "Not workers, not guests. Not anywhere indoors or outside. It's a class-A carcinogen that kills people. Revel CEO DeSanctis gets it and deserves a standing ovation."

Atlantic City officials tried to ban smoking in the casinos in 2008 but failed. Due to a technicality in the law the City Council passed, all smoking was banned for a month before the law could be repealed. During that time, no smoking at all was allowed on the casino floor, though gamblers could go inside specially enclosed smoking lounges that some casinos built.

In the first two weeks that smoking was prohibited, slot machine revenue plunged 20 percent at the four Atlantic City casinos operated by what was then known as Harrah's Entertainment Inc., now Caesars Entertainment.

DeSanctis said Revel will gradually unveil its attractions between April and Memorial Day weekend, having consciously decided not to open all at once. He was blunt about expectations for what the very first Revel-ers might experience, despite the staff's best efforts.

"The worst possible thing you can do is open everything all at once with a big splash," he said. "This is a 6 million-square-foot facility, and lots of things are going to go wrong. It's all new staff, all new IT systems. You have to assume things are going to go wrong. We're expecting some issues."

Revel will have 1,898 hotel rooms and employ about 5,500 people. It will become the first casino to open in Atlantic City since the Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in 2003.

Attractions include Revelry, located 61 feet above sea level and named for its showcase restaurants, shops, nightclubs and day clubs, an intimate performance space for 700 people and its casino.

The Mezz, located 87 feet above sea level, includes a theater with a capacity for 5,500 people and 160,000 square feet of meeting space.

The Resort, starting at 114 feet above sea level, encompasses guest rooms and suites.

And The Lobby, also 114 feet above sea level, is nearly 2 acres of outdoor space anchored by SkyGarden and by InOut Pool, a pool that begins indoors and continues outside.

New Jersey Casino Control Commission chairwoman Linda Kassekert said Revel's opening "will mark the start of an exciting new era for Atlantic City."

"This new property will expand the market as it draws in new visitors to experience its shops, restaurants, spa, clubs and other amenities," she said, adding that the influx of new hotel rooms will help Atlantic City attract more conventions and overnight guests.

On April 2, seven of the casino's 14 restaurants will be open, with additional openings coming periodically before Memorial Day. There will be 500 hotel rooms open the first week, with an additional 500 the week after that.

All gambling facilities, including slot machines and table games, will be up and running on April 2. Its spa will open April 3.

DeSanctis said Revel will host play days for invited guests only, on March 29 and 30, mainly to test its casino games under the gaze of the state Division of Gaming Enforcement. Among the 5,000 people each night who will be invited are construction workers, electricians and carpenters who helped build the casino and neighborhood residents. People will not be able to walk in off the street on either of those days.

Revel was begun in 2007, before the national recession hit and credit markets dried up. It ran out of money in January 2009 and halted work with just the exterior nearing completion. New funding, including some tax incentives from the state agreed to a year ago, helped the casino complete construction.