

# Station, Caesars, MGM properties approved for 100 percent casino capacity

By [Bailey Schulz](#) Las Vegas Review-Journal

May 12, 2021 - 7:23 am

Three of the largest casino operators in Las Vegas can now run their casinos at full capacity.

MGM Resorts International, Caesars Entertainment Inc. and Station Casinos are the latest companies to have gaming floor capacity and social distancing restrictions waived by the Nevada Gaming Control Board. The Wednesday announcements mean an additional 24 casinos across the valley to can now operate at full capacity, effective immediately.

Industry watchers say the shift is a watershed moment in Las Vegas' road to recovery.

"The more properties that come back to full capacity really signal an end to much of the pandemic for us," Amanda Belarmino, an assistant professor at UNLV's college of hospitality, said. "First of all, it will allow people to go back to work. Second, it will speed our economic recovery as a city and a state that will help all of the members of our community. ... It is heartwarming to see our world come back."

# Return to normalcy

A Wednesday statement from MGM Resorts said the gaming floors at Bellagio, Aria, MGM Grand, Mandalay Bay, Park MGM, The Mirage, New York-New York, Luxor and Excalibur can operate at 100 percent of fire code capacity. The casinos had been operating under occupancy restrictions since their reopenings last year.

Clark County's 80 percent occupancy restrictions and 3-foot social distancing policies remain in place outside of the casinos, in areas such as the properties' restaurants, pools and other nongaming venues. The state's mask mandates also remain in place throughout the properties.

Belarmino said the announcement is "a great milestone" for the Strip.

"MGM has such a big presence on the Strip that increased capacity for those properties is a signal that we are truly re-open," she said. "With their portfolio of iconic properties, MGM's full return to the Strip signals a return to Las Vegas providing experiences unlike any other destination in the world."

Caesars announced Wednesday afternoon that all nine of its Las Vegas resorts' casinos would be able to operate at full capacity with no social distancing. The properties include Bally's, Caesars Palace, The Cromwell, Flamingo, Harrah's, The Linq, Paris Las Vegas, Planet Hollywood and Rio.

Station Casinos also received the go-ahead to operate all of its casinos at full capacity. The company's locals-focused properties include Red Rock Resort, Green Valley Ranch, Palace Station, Boulder Station, Sunset Station and Santa Fe Station.

Red Rock Resorts Inc., a publicly traded holding company that manages and owns a portion of Station Casinos, recently agreed to [sell the Strip-adjacent property Palms](#). The remaining properties in its Las Vegas portfolio — Texas Station, Fiesta Rancho and Fiesta Henderson — have yet to reopen since closing their doors in March 2020.

Silverton casino also got the green light Wednesday to operate without capacity restrictions. Others previously receiving such approval include Wynn Las Vegas, Encore, The Cosmopolitan of Las Vegas and The Strat.

## The push for vaccines

The Nevada Gaming Control Board said it would only ease casinos' operating restrictions if they took "[measurable and material steps](#) to vaccinate, and thereby, protect their workforce, visitors, and the community."

MGM Resorts had constructed a free on-site vaccine clinic at its Mandalay Bay Convention Center, as well as pop-up clinics at each of its Las Vegas properties, to vaccinate thousands of workers, their families, third-party partners and entertainers.

The company also launched a "Show Your Vaxx" campaign, which allowed employees who showed proof of their CDC vaccination cards the chance to win a variety of prizes, including show tickets, restaurant vouchers, spa vouchers, hotel stays and cash.

Another internal campaign from MGM Resorts, “Get the Facts About the Vaxx,” showed testimonials from community and company leaders emphasizing the importance of vaccinations.

Caesars has also offered [multiple COVID-19 vaccination events](#) onsite at its resorts. CEO Tom Reeg said the company will continue to offer incentives and provide easy, on-site access to vaccines for all of its Las Vegas staff.

“The expansion to full capacity and the elimination of social distancing on our casino floors in Las Vegas is a result of our Team Members’ commitment to doing their part to put us all on the road to recovery,” Reeg said in a Wednesday statement. “While this shift is encouraging, we understand that the battle is not yet won, and it is through a continued commitment to health and safety that Las Vegas can most quickly rebound.”

As of Wednesday, about 46 percent of Nevadans 16 and older have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, according to data from the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Census Bureau.

As for Station Casinos, the company has been hosting vaccination clinics across all of its properties since early April. Since then, “an overwhelming majority” of its staff has been vaccinated, according to a company statement.

The company said it will continue its vaccination awareness campaign into the summer, and will continue educating, incentivizing and rewarding vaccinated workers. It also plans to continue its partnership with Clark County by providing a drive-thru vaccination clinic at Texas Station.

Brendan Bussmann of consulting firm Global Market Advisors expects to see other properties' casino capacity restrictions waived in the coming days.

"Operators continue to push forward with vaccinating their staff to provide a COVID-free environment," he said via email. "While it may be some time before we return to normal in all aspects of our economy and experience, today's news and the growing list of properties ... shows Las Vegas' ability to bounce back from any challenge it has ever faced."

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