

Harrah's Closes Rio Rooms for Overdue Inspections

Las Vegas (AP) – Some rooms at the Rio hotel-casino owned by Harrah's Entertainment Inc. are being closed to accommodate overdue safety inspections that should have taken place during renovations done in 2004 and 2005, the company has said.

Since Thursday, Clark County inspectors have issued six notices of violation for work on the Ipanema Tower, which underwent the remodeling.

„As many rooms will be off-line as needed to facilitate the inspection process,“ said Jan Jones, Harrah's vice president for communications and government relations.

Jones said no more than a dozen of the 1,448 rooms in question would be closed at a time for three to five days, while the whole investigation could take about 11 weeks.

„We're much more concerned about being in compliance and doing due diligence than questions of revenue,“ she said.

The Las Vegas Review-Journal reported that it investigated the hotel's remodeling after receiving a complaint from an electrician. Some workers told the newspaper the project took shortcuts that could jeopardize public safety.

Harrah's managers maintained for several years that the remodeling of the 21-floor tower was only cosmetic and did not need the permits and inspections required for more substantial work that affects public safety, according to workers.

The company is conducting its own internal investigation, Jones said.

Stacey Welling, a public information officer for the county, confirmed its Department of Development Services had „reopened

its investigation into an allegation that staff at Harrah's Entertainment did remodeling work at the Rio Hotel without necessary permits. The department takes this allegation very seriously."

The cause of the infamous MGM Grand casino-hotel fire in 1980 that claimed 87 lives was traced to an electrical ground fault linked to a refrigerated pastry case in the hotel's deli, according to the official MGM Grand Hotel Fire Investigation Report.