

Casinos: Industry continues to shed jobs

Rincon Indian Reservation – Harrah's Rincon Casino said Monday that it has cut 66 jobs since summer, a relatively modest number that nonetheless adds to recent losses in an industry once said to be recession-proof.

Many of the positions have merely opened up and gone unfilled, casino spokeswoman Sheryl Sebastian said. The casino has laid off some employees and shifted others from one position to another in an attempt to avoid further layoffs, she said. The 66 jobs represented about 5 percent of the casino's work force of about 1,600.

Rincon was one of several tribal casinos in Southern California whose relative proximity to the region's 20 million residents was expected to help them weather any recession more handily than the competition in Las Vegas.

California tribes' gambling revenue rose 1.6 percent in 2007, to USD 7.8 billion, according to the most recent data compiled by analysts.

Vegas-area casinos' revenue fell 8 percent in the 12 months through November 2008, to USD 10 billion, according to the Nevada Gaming Commission. California's tribal casinos don't report their revenue individually, but the wave of layoffs and buyouts suggests most are similarly affected.

San Diego County's leisure and hospitality sector employed a record 171,000 in August but has shed 9,000 jobs since then.

„Like any business, we've re-evaluated where we are,“ Sebastian said.

Las Vegas-based Harrah's owns or operates 50 casinos. The

company has laid off employees at several and said last week that it has delayed parts of a USD 1 billion expansion at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, due to open this summer. Harrah's lost USD 415 million on USD 7.85 billion in revenue in the first nine months of 2008.

Other area casinos to cut jobs since summer include:

- Pechanga Resort & Casino just south of Temecula eliminated as many as 400 of 4,770 jobs late last summer.
- Morongo Casino Resort and Spa in central Riverside County laid off 95 people in early November.
- Casino Pauma in Pauma Valley notified employees in November that it expected to lay off an unspecified number of people.