

# USD 340 million damage estimate in casino fire

(AP) Fire officials in Joliet said an early estimate of fire damages to the Empress Casino is USD 340 million.

The March 20 fire sparked by a construction worker spread quickly and burned for 12 hours but was contained to a pavilion area.

The main part of the casino in Joliet wasn't heavily damaged.

Fire Chief Joe Formhals called the estimate rough, but said it's required as part of official reports. An Empress spokesman said insurance agents are still working on their own estimates.

The fire department estimate includes USD 290 million for reconstruction costs and USD 50 million for losses inside the building.

Empress officials haven't set a reopening date. Based on 2008 figures, the casino could be losing more than a half million dollars daily.