

Sioux City casino cited for allowing self-banned gambler to enter

Written by Administrator
Thursday, 16 April 2015 10:06 -

SIOUX CITY | For the second time since opening in August, the Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Sioux City has been cited for violating a state program that allows patrons with gambling problems to voluntarily ban themselves from Iowa casinos.

Iowa Racing and Gaming Commission staffers have recommended the Hard Rock pay a \$5,000 fine for allowing a woman to enter the casino and sign up for a player's club card on Nov. 21.

After the woman attempted to cash a check at the casino cage on Dec. 9, casino officials discovered she had agreed in 2007 to a lifetime exclusion from all of Iowa's state-licensed casinos.

More than 7,000 gamblers are currently on the statewide voluntary self-exclusion list, which is maintained by the Iowa Gaming Association. It's shared with all 18 state-licensed casinos, which are required to cross-check the names.

The Racing and Gaming Commission is scheduled to hold a mandatory hearing on the most recent Hard Rock violation at the panel's monthly meeting Thursday in Council Bluffs. The casino has acknowledged the violation and has agreed to pay a penalty, which the commission will finalize after the hearing.

Under state law, casinos can be fined up to \$20,000 for such self-exclusion violations, with the amount escalating with each offense. IRGC administrator Brian Ohorilko said a \$5,000 fine is consistent with a second violation within a one-year period.

At the March IRGC meeting, the Hard Rock agreed to accept a \$3,000 fine for its first offense of the self-exclusion program, which occurred in the same month as the second violation.

On Nov. 1, a man on the self-exclusion list entered the casino and won a \$5,000 jackpot at the craps table, according to IRGC documents. After requesting a copy of the man's ID and W9 tax withholding form, the winnings were paid. Only afterward, while completing required paperwork,

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did casino officials discover the man's banned status.

The incident was then reported to security. The next day, on Nov. 2, after being notified the man had returned to the casino floor, security escorted him off the property.

State law requires that any winnings as a result of wagers from individuals on the self-exclusion list be paid into the state's gambling treatment fund.

Hard Rock General Manager Todd Moyer said the casino takes problem gambling seriously and has multiple controls in place to prevent those on the self-exclusion list from playing at the casino.

"Sometimes, people that are on the list come in anyway, and it's our responsibility to police it," he said.

Unfortunately, human errors are sometimes made, he said.

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