

CASINO IMPACT ON LOCAL EMERGENCY SERVICES

There are currently 18 casinos in the state split evenly between racinos which offer slots and electronic game parlors at race tracks and native American operations which have slots and live table games. Voters in 2013 approved a constitutional amendment authorizing as many as 7 more full-scale casinos across the New York State in the next few years, the first of which will be in the Albany, Catskills-Hudson Valley and Southern Tier-Pennsylvania border regions from Binghamton to Lake Ontario. 17 companies filed applications by the 6/30/14 deadline for the first 4 licenses to be issued. Proposed locations include Woodbury, Finger Lakes Region, the former Concord Resort site near Monticello, the former Nevele Grande Hotel site in Ellenville, South Blooming Grove, Tuxedo, Montgomery, Newburgh, Stewart Airport area in New Windsor, Schenectady Mohawk River area, Howe Caverns, Rensselaer and East Greenbush.

A second expansion approved in 2013 will bring 1,000 video lottery terminals each to Off Track Betting (OTB) operated facilities in Nassau and Suffolk Counties on Long Island. NYS gets 45% for education and 10% for lotteries, 5% goes to horse interests, 10% to OTBs for marketing and 30% for operations. What's left of the 30% after expenses goes to the counties. Both OTBs have plans to build large facilities.

The new casinos have construction cost estimates ranging from \$300 million to \$1 billion and can include luxury hotels, restaurants, nightclubs, conference centers, adventure parks, golf courses, etc. Benefits to local economies include increased property tax receipts and thousands of jobs but there will also be concerns to current emergency service providers in the area. Existing casinos may be negatively affected by the new competition and long-term profitability is not guaranteed if even more casinos are opened in the future in NY and neighboring states.

There is reaction from New Jersey and other states to the new gambling operations New York. Online gambling conducted by the Atlantic City casinos has been implemented in NJ. Presently, only Atlantic City has casinos, several of which have closed this year. Legislation has been proposed to amend the NJ constitution to allow two casinos in the northern part of the state with one being in the Meadowlands and another proposed for Jersey City, both across the Hudson from NYC. Massachusetts will also be getting a new casino.

ORANGE COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY SERVICES issued a report in April on the *Impact of Casinos on the Emergency Services of Orange County, New York*. To get an idea of the impact on emergency services, 8 agencies in New York and Connecticut were contacted in to determine the impact that casinos have had on their jurisdictions. The overall findings from these telephonic interviews is that the casinos have had a minimal impact in terms of crime rates, medical calls, fire related incidents, and emergency management activities. The common theme from all the representatives interviewed for the study was that the casinos caused some initial issues but as the facilities matured, the impact was minimized – the one exception was significantly increased vehicular traffic. However, depending on specific local conditions, such as EMS/fire coverage by volunteer vs. paid departments, there could be a larger impact. Two large casino operations have their own on-site paid fire/EMS departments. Another casino contracts with a commercial provider for EMS responses. At another casino some of the security staff are also EMTs and can treat and release first aid type incidents. Surrounding jurisdictions will also be feeling some impact but without the tax receipt benefits if a casino opens nearby. The full report is on the internet at

<http://www.orangecountygov.com/filestorage/1140/16310/casinoimpactemergsvcs2014.pdf>

EAST GREENBUSH AMBULANCE DISTRICT, Rensselaer County, would be the recipient of an estimated \$92,492 in additional property tax revenue if Saratoga Harness is allowed to construction a casino in East Greenbush. The ambulance district provides services to about 15,000 residents in a 25 square mile area. The Board contracts with the FW Bruen Emergency Squad to provide ALS level ambulance services utilizing 3 ambulances and 2 fly cars. The squad bills users for services provided, collects user charges on behalf of the District and reports the collections to the Board annually. Gross squad receipts in 2012 were \$1,252,376.00.

SENECA NATION of INDIANS surrendered its ALS Ambulance Operating Certificate covering the Seneca Niagara Casino in Niagara County and the Seneca Buffalo Creek Casino in Erie County and has

contracted with commercial provider Rural/Metro for transport services at the locations. The Seneca Nation of Indians also operates casinos in Cattaraugus County with 2 in Salamanca and 1 in Irving.

WOODBURY TOWN AND VILLAGE, Orange County, has been offered by Caesars Entertainment up to \$1.9 million for ambulance and other costs plus up to \$2.4 million for fire trucks and equipment if given a casino license by NYS to build a planned resort near the Harriman metro-North train station. An additional \$20 million for road improvements at the Route 17 Exit 131 area was also offered as part of a "host community benefit agreement".