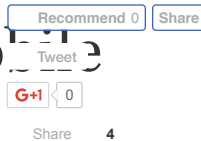


# Nevada approves new mobile gambling rules

Handheld devices can be used for games in casino public areas



**AP** Associated Press

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**LAS VEGAS** — Sarah Steineker is stuck to her seat. She's got a bingo game going, and the "hot ball" jackpot is up to \$14,490. But thanks to mobile gambling regulations that passed the Nevada Gaming Commission on Thursday, she soon may be able to take that bingo game with her elsewhere in the casino.

"I could be eating in the restaurant but I'm still involved in the hot ball," she said Wednesday as she sat with an electronic bingo device at the Texas Station casino. The downside of mobility is "you'd probably spend more."

Automated, portable bingo devices like FortuNet Inc.'s BingoStar have been around since the early 1990s — and are now available in 26 jurisdictions in North America — but they are not allowed outside bingo halls.

Regulations passed Thursday make Nevada the first in the nation to approve the use of handheld devices for gambling in any public area of the state's casinos, such as restaurants and poolsides.

Rules allow a range of games, including bingo, poker, blackjack and horse race betting. Use in hotel rooms and other places that cannot be supervised is prohibited.

Advocates say the move will better use resort space that is increasingly being devoted to non-gambling activities, such as shopping, dining and clubbing. But they admit it's not likely to lead to the lucrative world of Internet betting, which is barred by state and federal law.

"Pools, that are used by people as they are meant to be used, are not making them (casinos) any money," said Joe Asher, managing director of Cantor G & W (Nevada) LP, which has pushed to legalize mobile gambling in Nevada for the past two years. "We can offer a casino a revenue enhancement."

## Casino owners hesitant

Major players Harrah's Entertainment Inc. and MGM Mirage Inc. and neighborhood casino operator Station Casinos Inc. say they are taking a wait-and-see approach as the regulations and the technology unfold. Boyd Gaming Corp., whose holdings include the Stardust in Las Vegas and co-ownership in the Borgata in Atlantic City, N.J., said it is unsure about demand for hand-held gadgets, despite having electronic bingo devices at halls in its Las Vegas properties.

"Even when we brought those (bingo devices) in, they didn't replace paper," Boyd spokesman Rob Stillwell said. "We're still uncertain about how much demand there might be."

The process of certifying systems and having field trials will take at least several months, Gaming Control Board Chairman Dennis Neilander said.

Still, at least four prospective manufacturers are plowing ahead, while keeping their estimates for market demand close to their chest. Many expect New Jersey to follow Nevada's lead. "It's nice to hear that Nevada is going to be again leading the charge forward," Commissioner Sue Wagner said Thursday.

Cantor has sunk "millions of dollars" into development, Asher said. The company plans to use bond-trading technology that already has been in use on its "Cantor Index" mobile gambling devices in Britain since September 2003.

FortuNet said in a January share prospectus that, if mobile gambling was approved, it would move immediately to introduce more games for its



Joseph Asher, managing director of Cantor G&W, holds an HP PDA with a roulette wheel program, on

current clients to install on their BingoStar devices. “We expect to subsequently expand our marketing efforts beyond Nevada,” it said.

Shuffle Master Inc., a manufacturer of automatic card shufflers, has partnered with SONA Mobile Holding Corp., to create a personal digital assistant system that delivers its patented games, such as Ultimate Texas Hold’em and Three Card Poker.

“This allows the casino to increase the number of wagering positions in the casino without adding any bricks or mortar,” Shuffle Master CEO Mark Yoseloff said.

But taking gambling off the casino floor will make it harder to ensure minors don’t wager, said state Sen. Maggie Carlton, D-Las Vegas, the lone lawmaker who voted against the bill when it passed the Legislature last year.

Manufacturers say biometric fingerprint readers and regulations limiting use to public areas will keep devices out of the hands of minors. “It’s already hard enough to stop kids from playing Keno,” said Carlton, a part-time legislator who is a full-time waitress at the Treasure Island resort’s coffee shop.

As for mobile devices she has seen, “They look like a little Game Boy. They look like a toy.”

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Stephen Chernin / AP file

Joseph Asher, managing director of Cantor G&W, holds an HP PDA with a roulette wheel program, one of many gambling programs available, June, 2005