



By C. Roy Kibbe

Not so long ago, the idea that smoking would be restricted within public venues was hard to believe; and the concept of smoking bans that would prohibit smoking within bars was out of the question. Those days are gone. Today, fourteen states have passed laws that prohibit smoking in defined places such as bars, restaurants, and other specified workplaces, and there are an additional twenty-seven states where either state-

wide legislation is pending or individual towns or cities within the state have instituted smoking bans.

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In other words, 82 percent of states are currently living with or are evaluating some form of legislation that bans smoking. While it is true that most of the current laws exclude casinos or betting establishments from these bans, the casino industry cannot rely solely on these exemptions. Already, Delaware's legislation extends to betting establishments, and Colorado and New Jersey are considering legislation that includes casinos in the ban. For those of us who have even recently thought, "Las Vegas will never be smoke-free," the fact that Atlantic City is facing this reality right now must be our wake-up call.

It is estimated that one third of patrons of gaming establishments in Atlantic City are smokers. If a smoking ban was instituted, clientele would be forced to go outside to smoke, which sharply contradicts one of the principle business models employed by most casinos, namely the capture theory. There is a reason that there are ATMs, restaurants, gift shops, bars and entertainment inside of casinos; the fact that patrons will be forced to exit the casino to smoke is a true business risk. With people leaving the building to smoke, they are more apt to go to another casino, think about their losses and decide to quit while they're ahead, or simply go home.

While some feel that the smoking ban will protect patrons, many feel that the legislation is "threatening to force gamblers to take their coin cup outside when they want to



light up” (Curran 2005). The largest threat of the smoking ban is loss in revenue. There have been conflicting reports of whether the smoking bans have affected revenue for bars and restaurants in states with smoking bans, but it must be said that there is little doubt that if the smoking bans are passed, casinos will feel the pinch. This risk has already become a reality for the three racinos operating in Delaware. Prior to the ban, the revenue for these establishments was growing at a rate of approximately nine percent per annum; however, the year following the ban saw an 11 percent drop in revenue (Curran 2005).

It is too soon to guess what will occur in Colorado or New Jersey, but this is not the last time we will see this type of proposed legislation. There is simply too much information available to the general public that outlines the potential ill effects of second-hand smoke. A 2003 study conducted by the University of Minnesota School of Public Health concluded that “even a four-hour stay in a smoky casino results in a significantly elevated body burden of a potent carcinogen.” There is no scientific formula for the level of exposure required to develop an increased risk of serious repercussions such as cancer; however, these are the kinds of facts that are shaping the future of smoking in the United States. The standard arguments surrounding personal liberties or financial hardship simply are not standing up against the fear that someone else’s actions have the potential of harming another. Smoking has become a public health and safety issue and it is

a question that the casino industry must address before it is addressed for us.

*By incorporating air purification technologies into the design of the overall system utilized within the facility, the level of air pollutants that casino guests are exposed to can be dramatically lessened. This will create a comfortable environment that both smokers and non-smokers alike will appreciate.*

#### **A Solution: Indoor Air Quality**

While some states have banned smoking, other cities have chosen to enforce improved ventilation requirements for facilities that allow smoking. For instance, Boulder, CO and Honolulu, HI have banned smoking in restaurants and bars, except when there is a separately ventilated section for non-smokers. These cities are among the few that are leading the way in developing compromises that create comfortable

environments for both smokers and non-smokers.

For many casino patrons, smoking and drinking are part of the gambling experience, and so these freedoms need to be protected. At the same time, the needs and desires of non-smoking patrons must also be validated. The answer must be to proactively create the safe and comfortable environments that casino staff and guests want, thereby making it simpler for legislators to exempt casinos from smoking bans in the long term.

The only way to create this type of environment is to focus on indoor air quality within gaming facilities. Air ventilation is not enough. Even sophisticated HVAC systems that use up to 100 percent “make up” air, or new air brought into the casino from outside of the facility, do not have the ability to clean the air within the casino at any given time. To truly enhance air quality, there is still a need to remove contaminants between air changes. The air within the casino must be purified utilizing advanced air purification systems which can work with HVAC to output cleaner air.

One reason it is imperative to have these air purification units as part of the smoking solution is that pollutants such as tobacco smoke are heavy particles that end up lower down in the atmosphere. Air purification units located at the ground level of a casino can intake air pollutants such as tobacco smoke and bacteria and output clean air back into the casino. With the correct



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level of air purification, a dilution effect can be created whereby the total volume of air within the casino can be maintained at a cleaner level than what is currently achieved with the use of an HVAC system alone.

## Air Stratification

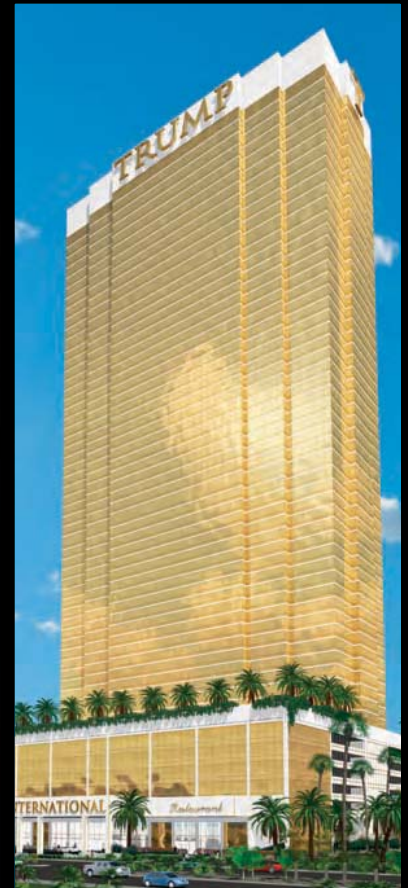
What's more, the additional air flow that can be generated by air purification units and the corresponding air changes per hour that these units create reduces the amount of air stratification present in an indoor environment. Air stratification is the development of differing thermal layers of air within a room. Typically this exists when the warmer layers begin to rise and are trapped near the ceiling. These layers of warmer air are typically drawn into the HVAC system by ceiling-mounted return air vents, and the system is then required to provide additional cooling of this air before it is redistributed into the environment. Conversely, the colder air at the lower levels is drawn into the return air vents near the floor and requires additional heating before it is redistributed. Using advanced air purification systems to drive the purified air to the ceiling provides the necessary turbulence to break up the stratification and temper both the warmer and cooler layers. This results in a balancing of the temperature within the space, and requires less work on the part of the HVAC system to recondition the air.

At the end of the day, HVAC systems cannot do enough alone to create the level of indoor air quality that the public, the legislators and most importantly, casino guests desire. By incorporating air purification technologies into the design of the overall system utilized within the facility, the level of air pollutants that casino guests are exposed to can be dramatically lessened. This will create a comfortable environment that both smokers and non-smokers alike will appreciate.

There is no question that smoking legislation is in the here and now. There is also no question that there is a real business risk if this kind of legislation is extended to include casinos and betting establishments. The question that remains is: how will the industry respond?



*C. Roy Kibbe is president of Airistar Technologies, L.L.C., a Waukegan, Illinois provider of air purification systems and information on indoor air quality. He can be reached at 1-800-755-8006.*



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ARCHITECTS • PLANNERS

2965 S. Jones Boulevard, Suite C ■ Las Vegas, NV 89146

702.940.0000 ■ 702.940.0001 Fax

Email: [info@bwaltd.com](mailto:info@bwaltd.com) ■ [www.bwaltd.com](http://www.bwaltd.com)