

Luxxor raid netted more than 50 gaming machines, \$5,000

February 18, 2016 6:31 PM EST

By Christy Andrews, ABC7 Weekend Anchor



LEHIGH ACRES - For the first time, we're getting a look inside the gaming operation that was just busted in Lehigh Acres. Deputies raided Luxxor Gaming on Lee Boulevard Wednesday after a six-week investigation.

The Lee County Sheriff's Office confirms charges are expected in the closure. But at this point, it is not clear exactly who will be holding the smoking gun in the case.

Visitors to the Luxxor told us they walked out with some money, but the winnings were small.

"We win \$20 - \$25 just for entertainment," said Maj Buckley, a seasonal resident.

Maj Buckley and friend Alice go to the Luxxor every Thursday. But no one answered the Luxxor doorbell for today's visit for any of the customers trying to play the casino-style games.

The sheriff's office launched an investigation six weeks ago after receiving tips that there was illegal gambling at the location.

On Wednesday, investigators collected more than 50 gaming machines, \$5,034 in U.S. currency and approximately \$4,800 in ancillary equipment and furniture.

"There was one big truck, and there were cops in masks and some other cops without masks," said Sandro Rodriguez of Lehigh Acres. "It looked like they were taking everything away from the building."

Gov. Rick Scott signed a bill in 2013 that cracked down on gaming and adult arcades though many locations stayed open.

"You know there's a lot of crime happening here in Lehigh, and I'm fed up," Rodriguez said. "I've been here almost 29 years, and I'm tired of it so you know if that's a crime, take care of it."

While some visitors seemed happy the shop closed up; others just wanted their weekly entertainment back.

"We never ended up in trouble," said Buckley.

Visitors say the Luxxor has been around for about three years.

Before it, another casino-style gaming center was at the location. Residents say that center was raided at least once before it closed down.

We spoke with players who admitted they won cash, and wanted to know if those players could be in trouble? The short answer is yes. Based on Florida statute, gambling and winning cash could land you in legal trouble.

"It's a lot of stuff to identify what to do and not to do," Kevin Jursinski, an attorney in Fort Myers, said.

Jursinski said the current Florida gaming statute 546.10 says gift cards, cash and alcohol cannot be given away as prizes at gaming operations. It also forces operators to change games from games of chance to games of skill.

"I think there are a lot of game operators that are out there that are simply not operating in accordance with the law, not because they intentionally want to violate the law, but they just simply do not understand it," Jursinski said.

Jursinski said the operator can also be confusing to enforce.

"It's very hard on law enforcement to come in to a place and identify is this a game of chance or a video game that resembles a slot machine versus a game of skill."

He said the current statute is so restrictive it's difficult for operators to comply.

"The best way an operator can do this is to set up their games properly and have their prizes displayed and then demonstrate that to law enforcement," Jursinski said.