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MGM Mirage units settle cases
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by Arnold M. Knightly

Las Vegas Gaming Wire

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LAS VEGAS, Nevada -- Two subsidiaries of MGM Mirage on Wednesday signed settlements with the Justice Department ending 5-year-old cases addressing Americans with Disabilities Act violations at the company's Mandalay Bay and Tunica, Miss., Gold Strike resorts.

"We hope that these agreements ... will serve as models for the industry on how these types of structures should be made," said Assistant U.S. Attorney General for Civil Rights Wan Kim said.

The settlements stem from a case that began after a customer slipped in the shower at the Mississippi resort.

Kim said the agreement was not a "seal of approval" for other hotels and casinos in Las Vegas and around the country, including other MGM Mirage properties.

Kim said other problems could exist locally but declined to say whether there were any open investigations.

"I think all casinos, all resorts, all hotels should take a hard look and determine whether they are compliant with the ADA," Kim said.

The agreements calls for several improvements, including improved access to guest rooms and suites, visual alarms in guest rooms for hearing impaired, better access to entertainment venues, restaurants and other assembly areas, and training for staff and management.

The federal government also levied \$30,000 in civil penalties for violations at the Strip resort and an additional \$25,000 for violations in Tunica.

MGM Mirage has three to six years to comply with the agreement, which will be monitored by government officials.



Company spokesman Alan Feldman said the violations predate MGM Mirage's acquisition of the properties from Mandalay Resorts. But he added that the company has worked closely with the government and has already gotten many of the rooms up to code.

"We have worked for a very lengthy period of time to conclude this agreement," Feldman said. "We've already completed many of the improvements called for under the agreement."

He said the company will spend around \$20 million during the next five years on both properties to improve and upgrade accessibility. Much of the cost will be included in renovations at Mandalay Bay and in a larger master plan for the Gold Strike, which could be announced by year's end.

MGM Mirage acquired both properties in April 2005 in the \$7.9 billion buyout of Mandalay Resort Group.

The initial investigation began in 2002 after the Justice Department received a complaint from a customer at the Gold Strike who fell in a shower because the controls were not located within reach as required by law.

Kim declined to specify how the incident in Mississippi led to the investigation of the Las Vegas property. He added that the customer who filed the original complaint had reached an earlier settlement with the property.

Feldman said the company knew of the investigation at the time and decided to take responsibility for resolving the issues.

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