



In this newsletter;  
**EPA's latest on refrigeration**

## *The Journal*



# Viejas Casino & Resort Completes a Seven-Year Expansion Project

SAN DIEGO July 8, 2019; Viejas Casino & Resort today announced the completion of its seven-year renovation and expansion. Since initiating the project in 2011, the popular destination has constructed three hotel towers, redesigned the entire property, and launched a new and extensive center bar and high limit gaming area. The project completion follows closely behind the opening of Viejas Casino & Resort's recently developed adult-only destination, Willows Hotel & Spa.

“We’re thrilled to see the entire property come together and are proud of all the incredible improvements”

The new, stylish 1900-square-foot, 360-degree center bar includes 50 seats with gaming machines at each seat, 18 65-inch televisions wrapping around the entire bar and caters to both small and large groups. The center bar has its own 24-hour sports bar-style food menu, and features an extensive alcohol list, with wine and beer on tap including the recently launched Viejas Golden Blonde, a light and refreshing blonde ale created in collaboration with Mission Brewery. Center bar's design incorporates various architectural elements including tile, stone, geometric shapes, and bright colors with the intention to make a bold statement as the new centerpiece of the Viejas property. These specific design elements were selected with the goal of accentuating the height of the center bar by guiding the eye from floor to ceiling and offering guests a big, open space for imbibing and socializing while on property.





Upping the ante, the 15,415-square-foot high limit gaming area includes more than 80 new slots and poker machines, and eight exclusive High Limit Tables games. Created for those looking for an exclusive high-stakes wagering experience, the high limit gaming area at Viejas Casino & Resort is now the most expansive and exclusive in the market.

The third and most recently constructed hotel tower is home to Willows Hotel & Spa, which opened in February 2018. Designed to embody modern elegance and luxury, the adult-only hotel offers guests a serene, architecturally-stunning escape that pulls the surrounding scenic mountains capes into the property. Willows Hotel & Spa has 159 VIP suites,

luxury spa facilities, a fitness center, signature restaurants, including Locale Kitchen & Lounge, Ginger Noodle Bar and Daily Roast, as well as an expanded gaming space. The first two hotel towers opened in 2013 and 2015 and make up Viejas Hotel, the property's family-friendly destination that features 203 luxury rooms and 34 VIP suites. In addition, Viejas Hotel includes a lush, spacious pool and lounge area, two modern fitness centers and two especially user-friendly business centers that enable guests to work and play.

“We’re thrilled to see the entire property come together and are proud of all the incredible improvements,” said Robert Welch, Jr., Chairman of the Viejas Band of Kumeyaay Indians and Viejas Casino & Resort. “It took seven years to bring our vision to reality and create a truly remarkable casino and resort, where our guests can enjoy all the new offerings and amenities. The expansion also connects us to a broader audience because we now have something luxurious and exciting for everyone to enjoy, be it adults who love gaming, to young couples who enjoy spending time at a high-end pool or families looking for an all-day or weekend destination.”

Welch Jr., added, “Our new center bar, which is the biggest in the San Diego area, will be a popular meet up point in the casino. We’re looking forward to having our guests finally experience it!”

Viejas Casino & Resort began the renovation and expansion project with the intention of providing an unmatched guest experience and to design the most luxurious escape among Southern California competitors. In the wake of these revamps, Viejas Casino & Resort has evolved into San Diego's premier luxury gaming resort and regularly receives industry accolades, including annual rankings as a AAA Four Diamond Hotel and Forbes Travel Guide 4-Star Resort. Most recently, Willows Hotel & Spa was named Best Hotel during the 14th Annual HOSPITY Awards hosted by NEWH, the hospitality industry's leading networking organization.

To celebrate the completion of the renovation, Viejas Casino & Resort will be hosting a series of events during the grand opening weekend of Oct. 19-21.

On Friday, Oct. 19 Viejas will host an exclusive VIP event for media and dignitaries, which will feature the unveiling of the new center bar, a tasting of small bites from all six of the restaurants on property and live music.

On Saturday, Oct. 20, Viejas will host a grand opening event for the public featuring more than \$250,000 in cash and prize giveaways including a Mercedes-Benz convertible, theatrical circus performances, a dazzling fireworks show, live music and small bites from all of the restaurants on property.

For more information about Viejas Casino & Resort, visit [www.viejas.com](http://www.viejas.com).

#### ABOUT VIEJAS CASINO & RESORT:

Located at I-8 and Willows Road east of San Diego, the Forbes Travel Guide 4 Star and AAA Four Diamond Viejas Casino & Resort features world-class gaming with thousands of slot machines, exciting table games that include Blackjack, Baccarat, and Pai Gow, a modern and elegant bingo room, and an off-track betting facility. Viejas Casino & Resort also features a variety of restaurants including the AAA Four Diamond Grove Steakhouse, The Buffet, and The Café. The beautiful Viejas Outlets, located across the street from the casino, offers visitors a unique shopping experience with highly acclaimed stores, numerous eateries, Viejas Bowl, and during winter Southern California's largest outdoor ice rink. Viejas Hotel features 203 luxury rooms and 34 VIP suites, including a lush, spacious pool and lounge area. The highly anticipated new adult-only tower, Willows Hotel & Spa is now open and offers an additional 159 VIP suites, luxury spa facilities, signature restaurants including Locale Kitchen & Lounge, Ginger Noodle Bar and Daily Roast plus an expanded gaming space.

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## Refrigeration Industry Contends With Refrigerant Uncertainty; Questions arise as EPA offers little guidance

Michigan, July 2, 2019; Since the courts ruled that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) did not have the authority to phase down HFCs, the commercial refrigeration industry has been in a bit of turmoil. Many manufacturers had already been preparing to transition their equipment to lower-GWP refrigerants, but with no clear guidance coming from EPA, there are questions about

which alternatives will emerge as the frontrunners, as well as when this transition will start taking place.



Adding to the confusion are the states — most notably California — that are rolling out their own phasedown schedule of HFCs, which could lead to a patchwork of refrigerant regulations across the U.S. Until EPA issues its final regulations, there will likely continue to be a lot of uncertainty about refrigerant use in commercial refrigeration equipment.

#### CURRENT STATE

The federal role in leading the phasedown of HFCs is expected to be unclear for some time, said Mark Menzer, director of public affairs at Danfoss.

“We expected to see a proposal [from EPA] by now, but the federal government shutdown earlier this year delayed that,” he said. “Since EPA’s authority seems only to cover the transition from ozone-depleting substances (CFCs and HCFCs, mostly), we might see it focus its rules on users that are still using those refrigerants. EPA might tell those users that ODS replacements can only be low-GWP substitutes. That would be a very different type of regulation from the earlier SNAP [Significant New Alternatives Policy] rules and aimed at a different audience.”

With no clear direction from the federal government about what its long-term approach to managing HFC refrigerants will be, many states — especially California — are developing their own regulations about managing refrigerants, said John Prall, technical support expert for commercial North America, Embraco.

“While it would be ideal to have one regulation across the U.S., we are likely not going to see this in the short term,” he said. “My expectation is that most OEMs will build toward the toughest regulatory environment and consolidate their portfolio around this where they can reasonably do so.”

Richard Gilles, senior product leader of distributed solutions at Hussmann Corp., believes that it will take several years — and perhaps the next presidential administration — before there will be clarity at the federal level regarding HFC refrigerant policies.

“There is a certain level of ambiguity with the rescinding of SNAP Rule 20 [EPA regulation that prohibited the use of certain high-GWP HFCs as alternatives], which has led to individual states to act in their best interests,” he said. “The best strategy for OEMs is to focus on a large-scale, countrywide basis to best serve our customers. This does cause extra planning and logistics to handle the changing regulatory environment.”

Even though SNAP Rule 20 has been vacated, EPA still has the authority to phase out R-22, which will occur as planned on Jan. 1, 2020.



“It may surprise some to learn that there are still a large number of operators with older refrigeration systems that are currently charged with R-22,” said Andre Patenaude, director of food retail marketing and growth strategy — cold chain at Emerson Commercial and Residential Solutions.

After the phaseout of R-22 on Jan. 1, these operators will likely either retrofit their systems with lower-GWP refrigerants, or else keep recovering and reusing R-22 until they’ve exhausted their supplies.

“Very similar scenarios will be taking place in California, where R-404A and R-507A are no longer allowable in many new commercial refrigeration applications,” said Patenaude. “These operators can significantly reduce their carbon footprint by moving to lower-GWP gases, such as R-448A and R-449A, and recover, recycle, and/or reuse R-404A as a service-only refrigerant on remaining legacy equipment.”

#### WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

Not surprisingly, there will be a variety of ways in which store owners will address the phaseout of R-22, as well as the possible phase down of HFCs.

“Store owners are going to do whatever makes the most financial sense for their businesses,” said Prall. “Most independent store owners will likely not pay attention to what refrigerant is currently being used unless they have to purchase more refrigerant to replace leaked refrigerants. For self-contained equipment that is reaching the end of its useful life, it’s a very easy decision to go to a natural refrigerant. With remote systems, the decision on what direction to go is a much more complex decision and many factors need to be considered.”

The location of the retailer will also make a difference, as environmental awareness, as well as state regulations, will feature more prominently in certain parts of the U.S. than in others.

“Operators in California are well aware of the efforts to phase down HFCs and most likely have an alternative refrigerant plan in place,” said Patenaude. “In other parts of the country, we typically find that only the larger and more sustainably minded retailers have begun the process of exploring low-GWP refrigerant options as part of their sustainability objectives. These operators have retrofit plans in place and are even trialing alternative refrigerant architectures in their stores.”

For end users, Patenaude noted that there are essentially two options:

Retrofit using lower-GWP HFOs, which requires minimal changes. Moving from R-404A to R-448A or R449A may require adding compressor cooling and other relatively minor system changes. Through energy optimization best practices, this will reduce indirect emissions, which lessens the carbon footprint.

Move to a new and/or natural refrigerant system, either for a new location or a complete refrigerant retrofit of an existing site. In some cases, all-natural systems have been installed in parallel with an existing system, and then a slow transition is made to use

only the natural solution.

For option No. 2, there are a growing number of natural solutions for supermarket refrigeration, including low-charge ammonia chillers on the roof, R-290 integrated cases fitted with micro-distributed systems, and CO<sub>2</sub> transcritical and/or cascade systems using CO<sub>2</sub> for the low temperatures and an HFO (or lower-GWP HFC) for medium temperature, said Patenaude.

“Of course, despite contractors advising otherwise, some operators will keep using refrigerants such as R-404A or R-22 until they’re forced to make a change,” he said.

Most food retail chains have a continued program of reviewing and testing various alternatives in order to be prepared with the best solution for their particular circumstance as the issues become clearer, said James Knudsen, North America sales driver and food retail segment leader at Danfoss.

“There is typically a portfolio of solutions for each application,” he said. “Most are testing and selectively implementing retrofits with lower-GWP blends while testing or at least evaluating natural refrigerant opportunities such as CO<sub>2</sub>/ammonia cascade, CO<sub>2</sub> transcritical, and water-loop systems with hydrocarbon self-contained cases. The food retailers are aware that the environment can change quickly as the political winds shift.”

Contractors obviously play a big role in helping food retail customers stay on top of regulatory changes, and they are instrumental when it comes to choosing the right equipment that will best serve their customers’ needs.

“We encourage contractors to work closely with OEMs such as Hussmann in order to stay current on all available solutions,” said Gilles. “Also, there is a need to be open to meet the customer where they are to work together on a solution. Creativity and exploring new options are a must. Our scientists, engineers, and designers are constantly working collaboratively with our customers to ensure we come up with the best solutions to address their needs now and in the future.”

#### TECHNICIAN SHORTAGE

The transition to lower-GWP refrigerants is coming at a difficult time for the refrigeration industry, which is already struggling to attract enough technicians to service and install equipment. And it’s going to get worse.

“Not only is there a current need for more qualified refrigeration technicians, the problem is expected to grow even more by 2024, when almost 60,000 HVACR positions are projected to be open,” said Gilles.

Refrigeration systems are also becoming more complex in order to meet refrigerant and energy regulations, leading retailers to be concerned that there won’t be enough technicians who are qualified to service them, said Patenaude.

“Low-GWP natural and synthetic refrigerants come with known caveats — such as higher pressures, potential flammability, and toxicity — and many operators are uneducated about the risks and anxious about the costs to own and maintain these systems,” he

said. “From a manufacturer’s perspective, we’re trying to develop smarter systems that help take the burden off contractors.”

These smarter systems are designed with built-in diagnostics, connectivity, analytics, and human machine interfaces to help contractors troubleshoot issues and provide guidance for fast resolution, said Patenaude.

Hussmann is also continuing to develop sophisticated, sensitive, and easy-to-use technology that will help diagnose issues, as well as allow customers to plan the necessary routine maintenance for their equipment. In addition, they are making their equipment easier to use for both the contractor and the end user.

“We’ve recently developed and launched solutions like our microDS systems, which are simplified micro-distributed merchandisers that are faster and easier to install and maintain,” said Gilles. “These systems use propane (R-290) and do not require mechanical rooms or other large changes to the current store layout or even tenant space.”

#### STAYING INFORMED

For those already in the refrigeration industry, staying abreast of refrigerant regulations and new solutions is becoming even more important. Fortunately, many manufacturers offer a wide array of materials that can help technicians keep their skills current.

Danfoss, for example, provides numerous training opportunities, including sessions at its facility in Baltimore, as well as on-site. In addition, for the past three years, the Danfoss Mobile Training Unit has toured around the U.S., providing training on transcritical CO<sub>2</sub> systems.

Knudsen noted that the classes for the mobile training unit have often been over capacity, demonstrating the need for this type of training.

Embraco has created several training videos about proper care of compressors and how to handle systems using R-290, which are free to view online ([www.refrigerationclub.com](http://www.refrigerationclub.com)).

Prall noted that the company also conducts multiple webinars throughout the year with various organizations to assist in growing the knowledge base.

Hussmann recently started partnering with Lincoln Tech trade schools in order to provide a program for supermarket refrigeration technician training.

“We sponsor students and cover their tuition, room, and board during their eight-week training program, because it is so important to have well-trained technicians to work in our robust, exciting industry,” said Gilles.

Through its E360 platform, Emerson offers webinars, articles, and live forums regarding the latest regulatory updates.

“As the refrigeration landscape is becoming more complex, many companies are realizing that they don’t have all the expertise and skill sets to solve their problems on their own,” said Patenaude. “This is creating new opportunities for companies to augment their capabilities by partnering with other companies that can help fill their knowledge gaps. Emerson is optimistic that this continued collaboration and industrywide dialogue will transform our current challenge into an opportunity to create the most ... viable refrigeration solutions of the future.”

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