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Police: Woman left five children alone in car while gambling

Allentown woman is charged with endangering her five children.

August 03, 2012 | By Pamela Lehman, Of The Morning Call

For about an hour one night last week, Yulissa Troncoso was paged repeatedly over the intercom as she played the slots at the Sands casino, Bethlehem police said.

The casino was trying to reach her because her five kids — the youngest 10 months old — had been discovered alone in her car with the windows cracked open slightly, police said. The high temperature that day, July 26, had been 91 degrees.

In what could be the first case of its kind locally, Troncoso, 33, of 518 N. Dauphin St. in east Allentown, was charged Friday with leaving her kids alone in her car while she gambled.

She cried as she was arraigned on five counts of endangering the welfare of a child, police said, and then was sent to Northampton County Prison under \$10,000 bail.

"She wanted to gamble and she took her gamble and lost," police Lt. Mark DiLuzio said. "You don't leave a child alone in a car, unattended, under any circumstances."

Charges weren't filed until Friday because investigators were reviewing video surveillance and awaiting approval from the Northampton County district attorney's office to prosecute Troncoso, DiLuzio said.

Bethlehem police could not immediately say for sure that this was the first case of its kind in the Lehigh Valley, but they did not know of any others.

District Attorney John Morganelli could not be reached for comment. He has said his office will seek "severe sanctions" for parents who leave their kids alone while gambling. He said none of those charged would be allowed to participate in a first-time offenders' program.

In the past two years, 10 people have been arrested at the Parx Casino in lower Bucks County and charged with endangering the welfare of children. In other cases across the country, children died after being left alone in casino parking lots and locked in sweltering vehicles.

According to court records in the July 26 incident:

Security officers at the Sands Casino Resort Bethlehem were on patrol inside the garage around 9:20 p.m. when they saw children in the vehicle with four slightly open windows. Security then called Bethlehem police.

The children's ages are 10 months, 2 years, 6, 11 and 12.

The oldest girl told police her mother had a cellphone and she knew the number, but Troncoso didn't have the phone with her.

Troncoso continued to gamble in the casino for about an hour while she was repeatedly paged over the intercom. Video surveillance showed her playing slot machines, according to the court records.

Police said the children were not injured. They are unsure if the children were placed in the custody of a relative.

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