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Delaware casinos' online gambling will be run through Facebook

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Delaware's three casinos will launch the first phase of the state's online gambling operation Wednesday morning, opening Web portals for free slots, poker, blackjack and roulette games.

The no-money games are the precursor to the state's coming full-service, real-cash online gambling operation, now slated for launch at the end of October.

Starting at 6 a.m., each Delaware casino's homepage will direct visitors to the Facebook-linked game platform DoubleDown Casino, run by slot machine company IGT, one of Delaware's contractual slots vendors.

Delaware remains on track to be the first state in the nation to offer a full compliment of legal casino games online, made possible by legislation that cleared the General Assembly last year.

Nevada legalized online poker in February, and sites there began operating in the spring. New Jersey is close behind Delaware in implementing its online gambling law, passed earlier this year.

"This first phase will allow us to really get the players acclimated to the virtual world in a legalized environment," Delaware Secretary of Finance Tom Cook said.

While the free games will be open to players anywhere in the world, the coming real-money games will be available only to players within Delaware's borders, in accordance with federal law.

Dover Downs Hotel and Casino CEO Ed Sutor said the free play will be used as a regional marketing tool, combined with banners offering promotional deals and special offers.

"We are going to try to the best of our ability to get those people from the free-to-play to come play here," he said.

Free games will continue to be available when the real games come online, Cook said, with a variety of table games, card games and brand-name slot machine titles offered by the state's gambling vendors accessible through a single portal.

A link to the state's Council on Problem Gambling will also appear on the portal page, in smaller print under the casino logo.
