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# Mpls. Health Officials: Semen Found In 11 Of 17 Adult Venues

March 13, 2017 5:46 PM By Angela Davis

Filed Under: Adult Venues, Angela Davis, Minneapolis

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**MINNEAPOLIS (WCCO)** — Minneapolis health inspectors say they've found a potential hazard inside nearly a dozen adult entertainment businesses.



After receiving complaints for a few years about the cleanliness of adult clubs, teams of inspectors went in and swabbed down surfaces.

They collected samples of what they call "stains of concern."

The attraction is what you can see when you step inside clubs that feature nude dancers, video booths and sex toys.

But it's what you can't see when you're sitting in these chairs and at these tables that's a problem.

"You would not go into an establishment where you saw blood stains everywhere, because blood can carry diseases. Well semen can carry

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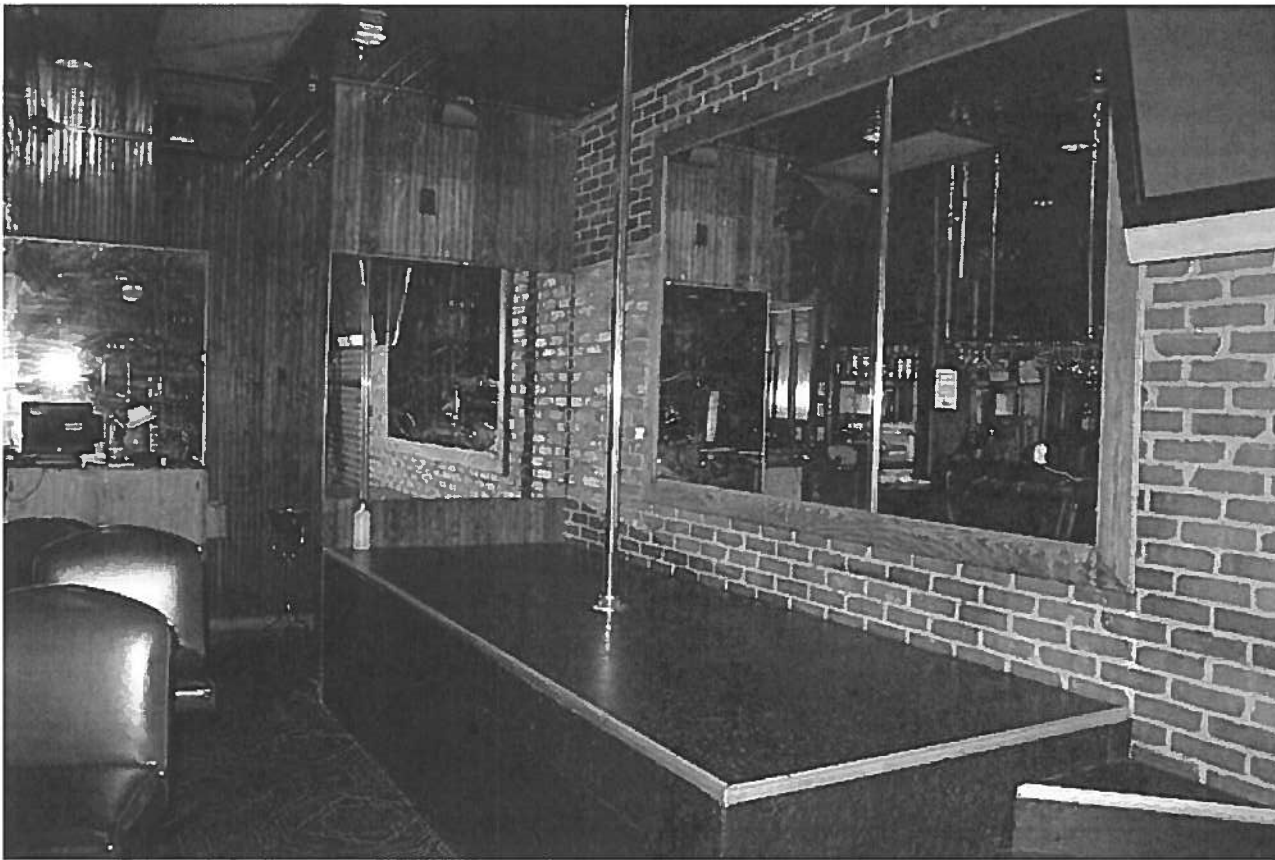


# MINNPOST

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## U of M study: Workers in Minneapolis' adult entertainment industry feel pressure to sell sex

By Kristoffer Tigue | 03/27/17



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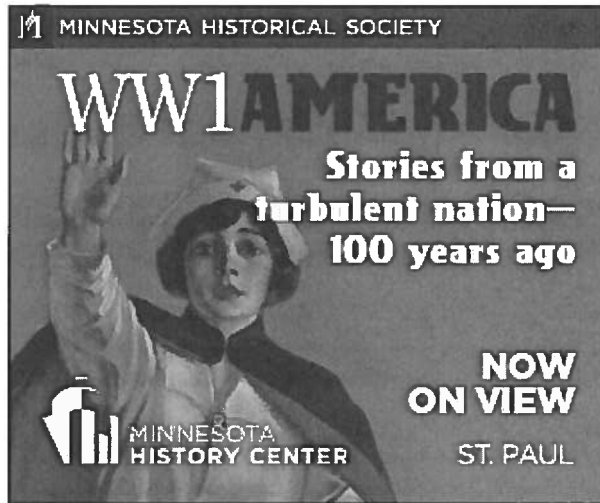
There can be upwards of 200 dancers working at adult entertainment clubs on a typical Friday night in Minneapolis.

Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC) will be releasing a new report Monday that confirms what Minneapolis city officials have long suspected: that sexual services are being sold at many of the city's licensed adult entertainment establishments.

The findings come just two weeks after the Minneapolis Health Department announced it found bodily fluids at 11 of the city's 17 licensed adult entertainment establishments, which are mostly concentrated around Hennepin Avenue downtown.

The UROC report surveyed more than 50 workers or former workers in the city's adult entertainment

industry, many of whom reported feeling pressured to perform commercial sex services for customers, in environments where unwanted touching and groping is common — and in some instances, where violent sexual assaults have occurred. Others reported feeling economically exploited by some clubs.



“The most significant concern is that there’s a fairly prevalent rate of customers pressuring entertainers for commercial sex,” said Lauren Martin, UROC’s director of research and the lead investigator for the survey. “The entertainers we spoke with indicated that that’s a constant theme among many customers.”

## A blurred line

There can be upwards of 200 dancers working at adult entertainment clubs on a typical Friday night in Minneapolis, Martin said, and most of them aren’t offering sex to customers for money. But because the atmospheres vary from club to club, she said, and because managers or

employees don’t always set or enforce clear boundaries between dancers and patrons, there’s sometimes a blurred line.

For example, because some dancers in some clubs will secretly offer commercial sex in private rooms, customers sometimes expect that all performers will offer the same. “In many instances that can set up a scenario for sexual assault, where a customer thinks they are paying for something more than what the entertainer understands to be the arrangement,” Martin said.

Some clubs do a better job of enforcing boundaries, Martin said, but in many clubs, entertainers reported having to enforce those boundaries themselves without help from bouncers or managers. Others reported feeling pressured from both customers and even management to sell sex, or having to pay some of their tip money to bouncers and managers in order to get proper protection at work.

“Clubs with great security, clear boundaries, where bouncers and managers really take it upon themselves to make sure customers know the rules, where they act quickly to remove customers who are violating the rules — that’s a safer environment,” she said.

## A public health issue

Other issues UROC identified in their survey included a lack of protocol for cleaning up infectious materials in clubs where bodily fluids were found, Martin said, which is a health and safety concern for both workers and customers of the clubs. “If somebody vomits or urinates, or if there’s semen, there’s no protocol and not a lot of support on how to clean up those materials,” she said. “There’s supposed to be provisions in place to make the workplace safe.”

Two weeks ago, the Minneapolis Health Department sent letters to 11 establishments where they found human semen, telling those clubs to clean up the bodily fluids and put in better measures to prevent the

problem from happening again.

Dan Huff, the city's environmental health director, said that while the health department is limited in its regulatory power in such cases, the main concern moving forward is ensuring the workers in those establishments are safe, and less about taking punitive measures. "Our concern is, 'What are the workplace health and safety issues being faced by these workers and how do we ... have constructive and effective rules to protect the health and safety of these workers?'" he said.

Currently, city ordinances don't do much in terms of protecting workers in the adult entertainment industry, Huff said, and the city will likely look into how they can update or create city laws to better serve those workers.

Minneapolis City Attorney Susan Segal said that over the last decade the city has shifted toward a more "victim-centered" approach for fighting sex crimes, opposed to simply prosecuting those caught doing it. Currently, she said, the city offers a program that connects people caught selling sex with advocates and other social services as an alternative to receiving criminal prosecution.

Treating these cases as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice one is another way the city is making that shift, Huff said, and he believes it'll have better outcomes for everyone. "When you look at it from a public health perspective, our goal is that everybody is safe, everybody is healthy," he said.

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##### **Kristoffer Tigue**

Kristoffer Tigue is a local freelance writer and former editor of the Twin Cities Daily Planet.



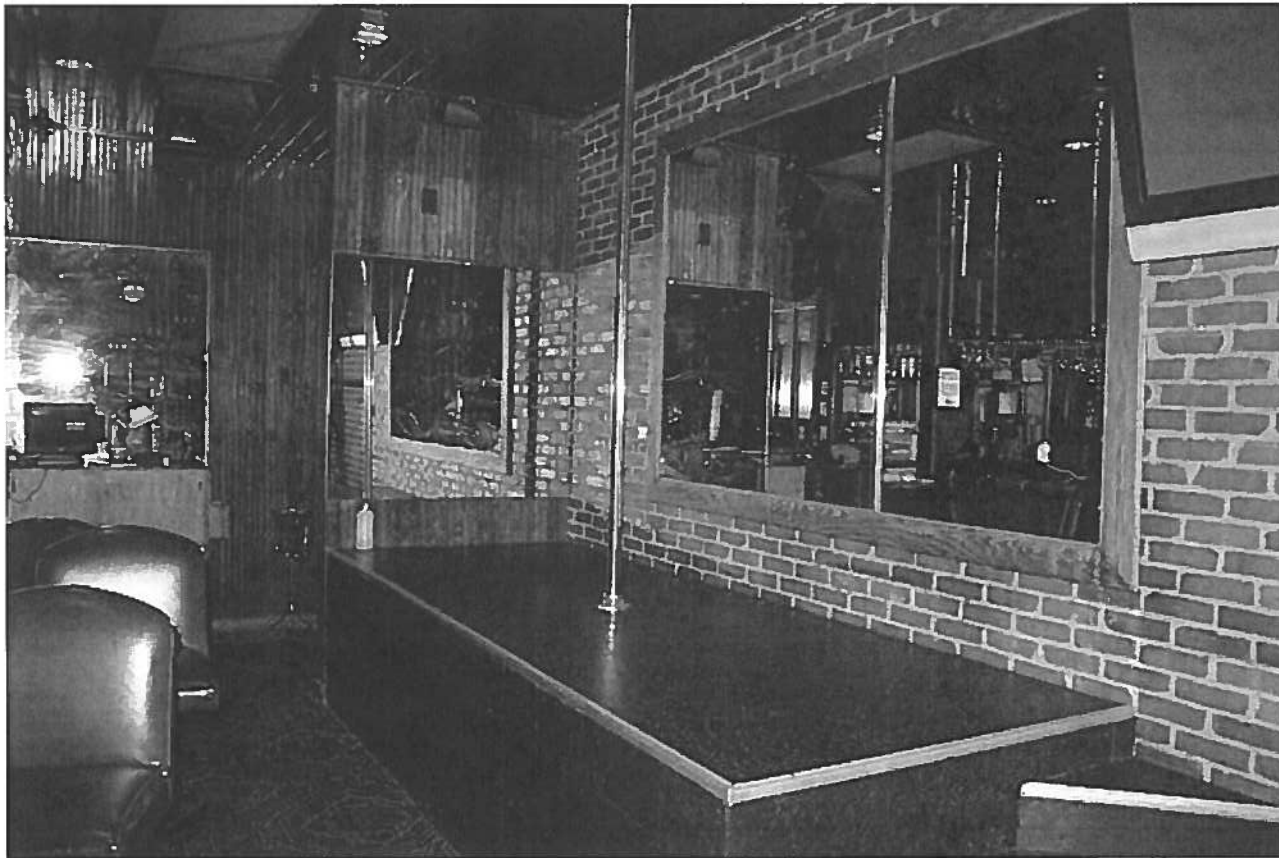


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##### **Kristoffer Tigue**

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MINNEAPOLIS

# Adult entertainers detail workplace safety hazards in Minneapolis clubs

By Emma Nelson (<http://www.startribune.com/emma-nelson/261800211/>) Star Tribune

MARCH 28, 2017 -- 12:11AM

Minneapolis city officials are exploring tougher regulations for strip clubs after two recent investigations revealed health hazards and sometimes dangerous conditions for entertainers.

The most recent findings, released Monday by the University of Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center (UROC), noted performers face on-the-job hazards ranging from injuries sustained during performances to physical and sexual assault, and they have few worker protections. The problems are particularly pronounced in private or semiprivate VIP rooms, and the performers, who are independent contractors, receive little training and can experience financial exploitation.

"This is a legal industry, and workers in a legal industry should have a safe and supportive work environment free from harassment and assault," said Lauren Martin, director of research at UROC and the study's principal investigator. "I think it's possible for this industry to have that."

In response to the report, City Council Member Cam Gordon said he is planning to introduce ordinance amendments boosting regulations for adult venues.

There are 17 licensed adult entertainment establishments in Minneapolis. The report focused on 10 that are considered strip clubs but did not link complaints to individual clubs.

Brian Michael, who owns Augie's Cabaret, said each establishment has the prerogative to remove customers who cause problems.

"People behaving poorly in a public space is a basis for kicking them out," he said. "If there's a problem with communication between entertainers, managers, staff, ownership, that's an internal issue that can only be improved internally."

Owners and managers at other clubs could not be reached or declined to comment.

The report found the most dangerous part of an entertainer's job is working in VIP spaces where customers pay to spend time alone with an entertainer. The secluded areas are big moneymakers — prices range from \$75 for 30 minutes to \$400 for an hour — and customers often expect sexual contact, according to the report.



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Customers have been known to use force “if they do not feel they are getting what they pay for.”

Entertainers also cite the lack of flexibility and pay, the report said. Anys house fees, fines and tips to club owners and managers, a form of taxation that can consume their earnings.

Those who participated in the study said they’d engaged in sex work, often feeling pressured to cross the line into commercial sex work. “It’s a gray area,” she said. “When it happens, the report said; often by allowing pimps and traffickers to recruit and exploit workers.”



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Enter (http://www.startribune.com/enforcement-or-city-officials-when-problems-arise, said Pawnya Konobeck, a burlesque performer who sometimes works in strip clubs and participated in an advisory group that helped inform the UROC study.

“If you’re the one who reaches out to an official ... you can easily lose your entire livelihood,” she said. “You will be blacklisted from working at any of our establishments if word gets out.”

### Suggested solutions

The Minneapolis Health Department commissioned the UROC study as part of an effort to reevaluate how it regulates licensed adult entertainment establishments.

Health department officials earlier this month released the results of inspections at all 17 adult establishments, which confirmed bodily fluids at 11 venues. Those venues — 10 of which have VIP spaces — were declared a public health nuisance. The health department ordered them to clean thoroughly and prevent the recurrence of bodily fluids.

Health department officials say they have little authority over these establishments. The only relevant city ordinance, which regulates “high-risk sexual conduct,” is considered outdated.

PHOTO: RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI/STAR TRIBUNE

Though the UROC report doesn’t offer specific policy proposals, it includes suggestions from entertainers including more training, opportunities for entertainment industry managers, increased oversight in VIP spaces and support for those who report sexual harassment and assault.

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Gordon, who chairs the committee that heard the report Monday, said he wants to involve UROC and entertainers, managers and club owners in ordinance changes. The subject will likely be introduced at the next full City Council meeting, he said.



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Zeus the golden retriever shakes water off his coat after retrieving a stick from the Mississippi River at the Minnehaha Park Off-Leash Recreation Area.

PHOTO: RICHARD TSONG-TAATARII/STAR TRIBUNE

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PHOTO: RICHARD TSONG-TAATARI/STAR TRIBUNE

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MINNEAPOLIS

# Minneapolis considers updating rules for adult entertainment venues

Report on adult venues draws attention to city's dated enforcement options.

By Emma Nelson (<http://www.startribune.com/emma-nelson/261800211/>) Star Tribune

MARCH 13, 2017 — 7:39PM

The tools Minneapolis officials use to regulate licensed adult entertainment venues may get an update after Minneapolis Health Department staff on Monday presented the [results of a recent sweep](http://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-adult-entertainment-venues-face-health-department-scrutiny/415993134/) of downtown venues to a City Council committee.

Inspections of 17 licensed adult entertainment venues last month confirmed the presence of bodily fluids at 11 establishments. Of those, 10 have private or semiprivate VIP spaces, including rooms with love seats or beds where patrons can pay to spend time alone with an entertainer.

Health department officials are concerned about disease risks for employees and patrons, as well as the nature of potential sexual activity happening at these establishments.

"The question that was raised for us: 'What's going on? Why are we seeing these kinds of conditions in these establishments?'" Dan Huff, the city's environmental health director, said at Monday's meeting.

The health department cited state law in declaring the businesses "public health nuisances" last week and is requiring thorough cleaning within 10 days.

The department cannot use the state law to issue citations in these situations, however. And while the city has its own ordinance regulating "high-risk sexual conduct," it's considered outdated and difficult to enforce.

As part of a request for the council to update regulations, Huff said, the health department has worked with Lauren Martin, director of research at the University of Minnesota's Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center. Martin, who has extensively studied sex trafficking in Minnesota, will address Minneapolis' adult entertainment establishments at the committee's next meeting, Huff said.

Committee members who attended the meeting took in Monday's presentation — which included information about how inspections were conducted and interior photographs



(<http://www.startribune.com/minneapolis-adult-entertainment-venues-face-health-department-scrutiny/415993134/>)

of the establishments — but did not ask questions or offer comments.

Council Member Cam Gordon, who chairs the committee, suggested taking some time to consider the health department's findings and Martin's upcoming presentation.

"We'll develop a game plan from there," he said.

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