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Police: Man left three children alone inside vehicle while gambling at Sands

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By Pamela Lehman, Of The Morning Call

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A man faces criminal charges after he allegedly left his three young children alone in his vehicle Wednesday morning while he gambled at the Sands casino.

Maurice Cook, 30, of the 600 block of Wolf Avenue in Easton, is charged with reckless endangerment and endangering the welfare of a child. He was sent to Northampton County Prison under \$30,000 bail.

Bethlehem police said Cook's three children — ages 1, 5 and 8 — were in the vehicle for 45 minutes with the doors locked until they were freed by police. Cook admitted he has a gambling addiction and was in the casino playing blackjack, police said.

"A concrete parking garage is not a babysitter," Chief Mark DiLuzio said. "This is totally unacceptable."

According to court records:

Sands security officers patrolling the garage around 10:15 a.m. found the children in the vehicle parked on the first deck of the garage.

Video surveillance showed Cook going into the casino around 9:30 a.m.

Cook admitted to police that he has a gambling addiction and said he left the children in the car.

"I am sorry for what I did," Cook told police.

DiLuzio said Sands security officers bought pizza and juice for the children during the incident. The children were examined by paramedics and released to the custody of a relative.

DiLuzio said the case will be referred to Northampton County District Attorney John