

HOSP JOINS CIG BID

By STEPHANIE GASKELL

Claiming financial hardship, 14 businesses — including a hospital and several psychiatric centers — have applied for special permits that would allow smoking, health officials said yesterday.

On Aug. 20, the state Health Department gave the city the power to grant waivers to businesses that could prove they lost money because of the statewide smoking ban.

The city is considering each application on a case-by-case basis, according to Health Department spokeswoman Sandra Mullin.

Very few establishments are expected to qualify for waivers — only bars that want to build a ventilated smoking room and owner-operated pubs.

The city had allowed for these exemptions until the stricter state law took effect in July.

The businesses all claim they lost revenues in the first seven months of the ban.

The city ban went into effect on March 30, followed by the statewide ban in July.

Ventilated smoking rooms are so costly to build that only a handful of bar owners sought to do so. Bars where the owner is also the sole employee are rare.

At least 75 upstate businesses have also applied for waivers.

The city has collected about \$20,000 in fines from violators of the ban.

Fines range from \$200 to \$2,000.

Got a match?

Establishments that have applied for a waiver (14)

General Cigar Co., Inc. (Man.)

Kingsboro Psychiatric Center (Bklyn.)

Creedmoor Psychiatric Center (Qns.)

Bronx Psychiatric Center (Bx.)

Bingo Hall (Bklyn.)

Roler-Ama Bingo (Qns.)

Bensonhurst Hall (Bklyn.)

Il Fagiano Ristorante (Qns.)

PC's Bar and Grill (Bklyn.)

VOX (Man.)

Britti Café (Man.)

CF Dominicana Cigars (Man.)

Staten Island University Hospital (S.I.)

Secrets pub (Man.)

The city had allowed for a one-month grace period during which only warnings were issued.

Between May 2003 and August 2003, the city collected \$18,540.

During the same period last year, under the 1995 Smoke-Free Air Act passed under former Mayor Rudy Giuliani, the city collected \$11,850.

Those claiming financial hardship must provide financial information, including documentation on loss in business volume since the law went into effect.

Health officials must also consider the adverse effects of second-hand smoke on those who would be affected if a waiver is granted, according to the guidelines.

It's unclear how long the applications would take to process.

Stray shots hit KISS guitarist

