

Casper braces for Pearl Jam

Security force of 150 planned

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CASPER — Nine thousand, two hundred empty seats stand ready for tonight's expected deluge of Pearl Jam groupies, national music media, scores of police and private security — and, in the middle of it all, thousands of Casperites.

The stage and lights are up and ready, and the band's 1995 summer tour kickoff here tonight, made possible by the band's recently smoothed-over feud with retail ticket giant Ticketmaster, has officials readying security and preparing for a sell-out crowd.

Max Torbert, director of the Casper Events Center, said 30 police, deputies, and Public Safety Department support staff will join a force of 120 "peer group security" in patrolling the parking lot,

manning the door, and roaming the floor.

Police and deputies will focus most on the parking lot, where alcohol and glass containers are prohibited due to the events center's status as a city park, Torbert said. But the lot will be open all day Friday, beginning at 8 a.m., and Torbert stressed that if concertgoers "want to gather early ... we're not prohibiting that."

Torbert did point out, however, that the parking lot holds only between 3,500 and 4,000 vehicles. "We will be parking people, but the later it gets, the worse your spot's going to get," Torbert said.

The peer group security will turn over any lawbreakers to police, and will spend most of their time working the floor, helping in case of crowding, injury, heat exhaustion, or any other troubles that may arise, Torbert said. "They're really there as a support group," he said.

Concertgoers are asked to bring a picture ID along with their bar-coded tickets because of security measures the promoters have taken against scalping. They

can also expect to be searched at the door as a "public safety measure," Torbert said, with an eye toward intercepting weapons.

"There are lots of things that just don't belong in the building with a crowd that big," he said. Torbert also discouraged the crowd from bringing purses or valuables to the show.

580 tickets still available

Torbert said a late release by the promoter means about 580 tickets are still available at the events center box office, which opens at 10 a.m. Friday. They will be sold on a first-come, first-served basis, he said.

Torbert also said people who have ordered tickets from the events center but have yet to pick them up should do so at their earliest opportunity Friday, rather than waiting until showtime, because long lines are expected.

Doors open at 6 p.m., and the show begins at 7:30 with opening acts The Scallywags and Bad Religion, Torbert said.