

Written by Administrator
Friday, 11 February 2011 14:09 -

Published: Friday, February 11, 2011, 3:00 PM **Updated: Friday, February 11, 2011, 3:59 PM**

WAYLAND TOWNSHIP - Sheryl Sprague made it to the new Gun Lake Casino today.

The Byron Center woman just didn't get in.

And neither did hundreds of others who were either turned away along roads leading to the \$157 million casino or, like Sprague, decided

the potential of a three-hour wait wasn't worth an opening day visit to the Wayland Township facility.

Police officers from multiple agencies [blocked off-ramps from U.S. 131](#) for hours and limited access to 129th Avenue to area residents.

Sprague said traffic backups slowed her trip to the 79,000-square-foot casino, but that she, her brother and father went to the Shelbyville exit, got off the highway and then took the back way in about 10:45 a.m.

When told it could be three hours before the trio could even get on the gambling floor, Sprague gave up. As she was leaving about 11:30 a.m., authorities were just closing off the roads.

"People are just going to have to go with the flow," she said. "They're trying to accommodate everyone, but there's a lot of interest and a lot of people who have gone down there today.

"It's extremely busy, but what else would expect on the first day?"

Casino staff posted on the facility's electronic sign that the 2,500 parking spaces on the premises were full. The gambling center's capacity is 2,100 and officials said they had reached the breaking point about noon.

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The turnout pleased David Frankhouser, the vice president and assistant general manager of the casino.

“Demand is extraordinary and we are excited about the public response,” Frankhouser said. “The safety of our guests comes first and therefore we are being very cautious about our judgment of building capacity.”

Casino management were doing [hour-by-hour assessments](#) of the crowd to determine when to let more people in.

Authorities said to expect the road and ramp closures to continue for hours.

Sprague's patience was the exact tune casino operators hope to hear.

“We took it in stride and we'll be back another day,” she said.

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