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Eagles, city planning for safety on Sunday

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Last year, with two minutes left in the NFC championship game, Philadelphia police circled the field at Veterans Stadium, coming in on motorcycle, horseback, bicycle and foot. Their mission was to prevent Eagles fans from storming the field, where a trophy presentation was soon to take place, and to keep them from tearing apart the old stadium, which was holding its final football game.

With the Eagles on their way to defeat, those precautions proved unnecessary. No one knows what the final minutes of this year's championship game with the Carolina Panthers will bring. But officials of the Eagles and the city say they will be ready for whatever comes, inside Lincoln Financial Field and out.

"There won't be a parade of horses and motorcycles," said Don Smolenski, the Eagles senior vice president who has worked with the city, the state, the National Guard, the league, and the team's regular security people to plan for Sunday. "There will be enough of a [police] presence, hopefully, to deter fans from rushing the field."

Smolenski pointed out that no fans had jumped onto the field Sunday at the conclusion of the Eagles-Packers overtime thriller, and added that fan behavior has been better at the Linc than it was at the Vet.

City Managing Director Phil Goldsmith said police, fire and other city departments were working to ensure safety and convenience for fans at the game and for those who, depending on the outcome, might be celebrating throughout the city Sunday night.

At a news conference, Goldsmith cautioned against unruly and unsafe behavior. "We will prosecute and arrest if needed," he said.

The police and fire departments will have emergency command posts at the stadium and extra police, fire and emergency crews working the stadium area and other parts of the city. Recalling that a tailgating fire damaged five vehicles on Sunday, Fire Commissioner Harold B. Hairston said members of his department would hand out flyers to tailgaters, listing fire-safety tips and regulations. In addition, a fire crew will be in the stadium area.

"We want to keep it festive and make sure everybody can get out of there with their vehicles intact," Hairston said.

Police Chief Inspector Anthony DiLacqua said an increased police presence would prevent any postgame celebrations from getting out of control.

"We're not in the business of stopping people from partying," DiLacqua said. "Partying is OK, as long as it doesn't impede on public safety."

As parking at the sports complex area is at a premium because of the construction of Citizens Bank Park and the demolition of the Vet, officials urged fans to take SEPTA to the game. Express service on the Broad Street subway is scheduled to begin at 4 p.m. with trains running every three to four minutes. SEPTA spokesman Richard Maloney said he expected more than 15,000 people, which would be a record, to ride the subway to the Linc.

Shawn Jalosinski, executive director of the **Sports Complex Special Services District**, advised those driving to the game to observe signs directing them to parking areas. He emphasized that street parking is prohibited in the stadium area.

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