WASHINGTON (CNN) -- The 1 to 2 million people expected to pour into downtown Washington for inaugural festivities will pose major challenges for the city, for law enforcement, and for the attendees themselves.

"Unprecedented numbers of Americans are planning to join us in Washington," President-elect Barack Obama said Wednesday in remarks released by the Presidential Inaugural Committee. "That will mean long lines, a tough time getting around, and most of all, a lot of walking on what could be a very cold winter day."

There is the potential for a lot of frustration.

Members of the general public will be funneled through metal detectors and other security screening to view the inaugural parade along Pennsylvania Avenue. The checkpoints will open at 7 a.m. and are expected to be closed by 10:30 a.m., when the parade route reaches its capacity of 300,000 to 350,000 spectators. The overflow will be directed to the National Mall. To systematically and calmly move people from the parade area to the mall, Washington police will have personnel moving through the crowd distributing maps and directions.

People who want to avoid some of the hassle can go directly to the mall area, where security checks will not be as intense. They cannot camp there overnight but can stand or sit in small chairs to stake out a space, according to a police spokesman.

For the first time, the entire mall will be open for inaugural spectators. It will hold about 20 giant screens showing the day's ceremonies.

"Information is my best friend," says Chief Cathy Lanier of the Metropolitan Police Department. Experts agree communication is essential to keep a crowd calm.
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