

Legendary ready for industry meeting and tournament

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The Emerald Grande's first group of visitors could be its toughest.

The luxury high-rise condominium at the foot of the Marler Bridge will play host this weekend to the leaders of the state's restaurant and lodging industry, who will convene in Destin for their board of directors meeting and a fishing tournament.

For the first time in its

more than 50-year history, the Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association is holding an event in Northwest Florida.

The organization represents more than 10,000 operations that make up the state's hospitality industry.

Bruce Craul, chief operating officer for Legendary Inc., said more than 130 people in town for the meetings and tournament will be staying at the Emerald Grande, which is nearly completed.

"For the Emerald Grande, this is our first group and it's a pretty big group for us. These are the our industry's leaders," he said.

Craul said others in town for the event will stay at the Village of Baytowne Wharf at Sandestin because of a lack of available units at the Emerald Grande to accommodate everyone.

With guests expected to have begun arriving on Friday, Craul said the finishing touches were being

put on to make sure the events go off without a hitch.

"There are plenty of last-minute details. At the Emerald Grande we're busy finishing things up so we're ready to receive those guests," he said Thursday. "It's pretty hectic to put it mildly. It's a pressure cooker."

Craul and Legendary are expecting more than 400 people to arrive in Destin for the meetings and fishing tournament, which begins at 7 a.m. Tuesday morning when more than 40 boats from Destin's charter fleet take anglers into the Gulf of Mexico.

The event also includes

a "Low Country Boil" on Monday evening and a "Rock the Docks" party and awards ceremony Tuesday evening.

Craul said Destin Mayor Craig Barker is expected to attend the awards ceremony to encourage the organization to return to Destin for future meetings and events.

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