

Crews Permanently Install Spire on Top of One World Trade Center

The silver spire topping One World Trade Center on Friday was fully installed on the building's roof, bringing the structure to its full, symbolic height of 1,776 feet.

Loud applause and cries of joy erupted from assembled construction workers as the 758-ton spire was gently lowered and secured into place.

"It's a pretty awesome feeling," project manager Juan Estevez said from a temporary platform on the roof of the tower where he and other workers watched the milestone.

He said the workers around him were "utterly overjoyed."

"It's a very special day," construction worker Randy Jacobs told CBS 2's Marcia Kramer. "Everybody's proud of what we accomplished. We made history again."

"It's great to finish off the tallest building in the Western hemisphere, the building that resembles New York," welder John McGowan said.

Installation of the spire was completed after pieces of it had been transported to the roof of the building last week.

"This is a great day for the country, it's a great day for the Port Authority and particularly for all the thousands of workers that workers tirelessly to make this a reality," said Port Authority Vice Chairman Scott Rechler. "This has been more than a job for these guys; this has been a mission and they've been working day and night as tribute to the victims of 9/11.

"It's not about handshakes. Today it's about hugs and remembering why we're here, that we're going to rebuild for the good of the country. We're going to rebuild bigger and better and show people that our freedom and liberty is something we're going to defend," Rechler added.

The building is rising at the northwest corner of the site where the twin towers were destroyed in the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks. The area is well on its way to reconstruction with the 72-story Four World Trade Center and other buildings.

Earthcam cameras captured last week's event when the spire was lifted to the roof, sped up the 12-minute crane operation by 98-percent and then created a 10-second clip of the project:

The 408-foot spire will serve as a world-class broadcast antenna. An LED-powered light emanating from it will be seen from miles away.

Installation of the spire began in December after 18 pieces were shipped from Canada and New Jersey.

The building was already the tallest in New York City. With the addition of the spire, it becomes the tallest building in the Western hemisphere and the third tallest in the world, although building experts dispute whether the spire is actually an antenna, a crucial distinction in measuring the building's height.

Down below, passersby were in awe of the sight.

“It’s the most amazing, beautiful sight seeing that it’s finally here and it brings a feeling of joy and satisfaction knowing that that no matter how bad things were, we’re back up. It should be a symbol to anybody and everybody out there knowing that we’ll persevere,” tourist Edward Klurman of Toronto told CBS 2’s Kramer.

“It’s so awesome. I wish it had happened sooner. It means we’re back. It means New York is back on track and it just means we are never going to give up,” added Joseph Sanchez of the West Village.

If it didn’t have the spire, One World Trade Center would actually be shorter than the Willis Tower in Chicago, which stands at 1,451 feet and currently has the title of tallest building in the U.S., not including its own antennas.

One World Trade Center is slated to open in 2014.