

One World Trade Center becomes NYC's tallest building

NEW YORK - One World Trade Center, the unfinished skyscraper where the Twin Towers once stood, became the tallest building in New York City on Monday.

Still under construction more than a decade after the Sept. 11 terror attacks, the building's skeleton surpassed the Empire State Building's 1,250-foot-high (381m) observation deck, reaching 1,271 feet (387m) with the addition of a few steel columns.

Once known as the Freedom Tower, One World Trade Center will eventually measure 1,776 feet (541m), including a 408-foot-tall (124m) needle that will be attached to the roof.

Port Authority executive director Pat Foye described in a press conference the "long difficult journey" leading up to Monday's milestone -- not simply for the sheer physical challenges of building the tallest skyscraper in the US, but also because of the "emotional significance" of the site, where more than 2,600 people died on 9/11.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg said the building's progress is "a testament to New Yorkers' strength and resolve -- and to our belief in a city that is always reaching upward."

Gov. Andrew Cuomo (D-N.Y.) added that the new tower represents "our commitment to rebuilding stronger than before."

"One World Trade Center will be the hub of new economic growth in Lower Manhattan and for the entire metropolitan region, attracting major businesses from across the globe and providing a workplace for thousands of New Yorkers," he said in a statement. About 55 percent of the building's office space has already been leased, Foye told reporters.

When completed -- likely in early 2014 -- it will count among its tenants publisher Conde Nast and the US General Services Administration (GSA).

The 82-year-old Empire State Building, whose tallest-building title was snatched up by the original World Trade Center in 1972, congratulated the new tower on its achievement.

"The world's most famous office building, the ancestor of all super-tall towers, welcomes our newer, taller cousin to the skyline," the Empire State Building's operators said. "We've watched you grow, and now we salute you."

According to the New York Post, One World Trade Center is not only trying to best the

Empire State Building in height, but is also anticipating a battle for business, hoping to attract tourists to its observation deck and broadcasters to its antenna.

"You've got to get people back to thinking of the Trade Center not as a site of an attack but as a center of commerce," one person who has been involved with the reconstruction of Lower Manhattan told the Post.

"You've got to think about it as a real-estate thing. And real estate is transactional -- it's about competition and retail and tourists."

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