

Spire for One World Trade Center Arrives in NYC

Verena Dobnik



A barge loaded with sections of spire for One World Trade Center, center, is guided by tugboat across New York Harbor, Tuesday in New York. The Statue of Liberty is at left, and the Empire State Building is second left. / Mark Lennihan/Associated Press

The crowning spire of the World Trade Center's tallest building arrived in New York on Tuesday — in giant steel pieces on a barge that floated in past the Statue of Liberty.

“It signifies that we’re back, we’re better than ever, and it shows the resilience of not just New York, but also people in general,” said Steven Plate, the director of post 9/11 construction at the lower Manhattan trade center. “The spire is a candle on the cake.”

He spoke aboard a boat that followed the barge tugged into New York Harbor from New Jersey’s Port Newark.

For these nine parts of the spire too heavy to be driven in, Tuesday marked the end of a 1,500-nautical-mile journey that started in Canada on Nov. 16.

A plant outside Montreal helped produce a total of 18 pieces to be erected atop One World Trade Center, rising into the Manhattan sky by spring to complete the 1,776-foot high-rise. The heaviest piece of spire weighs nearly 70 tons.

Symbolizing America's freedom, it will be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, Plate said.

"I feel very emotional about this, very proud," he said as he watched the barge move toward the gleaming skyscraper expected to open in 2014. "When I look at this site, I see ordinary people doing extraordinary things."

The remaining nine pieces of the 408-foot, \$20 million spire are being trucked in from Canada and South Plainfield, N.J., the location of another plant in the co-production. The spire is a joint venture between the ADF Group Inc. engineering firm in Terrebonne, Quebec, and New York-based DCM Erectors Inc., the prime steel contractor for the tower.

As the barge docked at a pier on the Hudson River, workers on the roof of the 104-story skyscraper were pouring the concrete base that will encircle the spire — to be erected in what is now an empty round socket.

With liquid concrete belching from tubes linked to powerful street-level pumps, the roof — open to the sky — resembled the deck of a busy, mammoth schooner. Iron girders crisscrossed the air under three giant cranes rising like metal masts in the wind.

For now, the top of the building is reachable using noisy industrial elevators, then climbing a series of narrow, vertical stairs.

Workers are shielded from the deadly sheer drop only by a cocoon of netting that cloaks the peak.

From there, the 360-degree stratospheric view of the city reaches deep into surrounding states and the ocean; some say you can see Earth's curvature.

On Tuesday, as one section of concrete was smoothed out, a cheer rose up among the men.

Suddenly, a commercial plane flew nearby, passing the trade center whose twin towers were decimated on Sept. 11, 2001, by terrorist-commandeered airliners.

With a beacon at its peak to ward off aircraft and LED lights in various colors, the spire will provide public transmission services for television and radio broadcast channels that were destroyed on 9/11 along with the towers.

The 16-acre site is well on its way to reconstruction, with the 72-story Four World Trade Center also going up within sight of the highest building.

Tenants for One World Trade Center's 3 million square feet of office space so far include magazine publisher Conde Nast and the federal General Services Administration.

On Tuesday, a visitor noticed graffiti on a rooftop girder, scrawled by a worker in the building that replaces the fallen towers as the dominant emblem of the New York skyline.

The words read: "Change is from within."

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