

World Trade Center Spire en Route from Canada

Steve Strunsky

The spire that will bring the total height of One World Trade Center to a patriotic 1,776 feet is making its way down the East Coast aboard a barge from Canada, due to arrive at Port Newark next week.

Most of the 408-foot spire — a framework of tubular steel in the shape of an elongated cone — is being shipped in 18 sections weighing from 10,000 pounds to 67 tons each, according to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

It's being transported by the barge Atlantic Salvor, which left Valleyfield, Quebec, on Friday, and is due to arrive at Port Newark sometime early next week, the Port Authority said. Additional pieces will be shipped by truck and are due to arrive in mid-December.

The spire will support antennae for a new broadcast facility located inside the building, also referred to as WTC 1, which the Port Authority is constructing near the site of the original Twin Towers destroyed on 9/11.

The \$3.8 billion tower is expected to be completed by early 2014. Just over half its 3 million square feet had already been leased as of July.

When the spire is erected, the Port Authority and its minority partner in 1 WTC, the Durst Corp., say the tower will be the tallest building in the Western Hemisphere, topping both the Willis Tower and the 1,389-foot Trump International Hotel and Tower, also in Chicago. And by at least one measurement, the assertion seems accurate.

The Chicago-based Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, a kind of international governing body for skyscrapers, ranks buildings in three different height categories: "height to architectural top," which includes spires but not antennae, and is the most coveted of the three; "highest occupied floor;" and "height to tip," which includes antennae. Questions arose over how WTC 1 would be judged after Durst and the Port Authority agreed last year to strip the spire of a decorative cladding included in its original design by architect David M. Childs. In May, the New York Times quoted a council spokesman, Kevin Brass, as saying the change "definitely raises questions" about the building's true height.

If the buildings council does accept the spire, WTC 1 would be the third tallest building in the world in "height to architectural top," falling short of only the half-mile-high Burj Khalifa in Dubai, and a structure completed this year, the Mecca Royal Hotel Clock Tower in Saudi Arabia, built to a height of 1,972 feet by the Saudi Binladen Group, founded by the father of Osama bin Laden.