

Signature beam placed atop One World Trade Center

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A horizontal steel beam signed by President Barack Obama -- and about 100 construction workers -- was hoisted from street level and installed on the 104th floor of New York City's One World Trade Center on Thursday.

Two workers, James Brady and Billy Geoghan, whose safety harnesses were attached first to two exterior columns and then to the white-painted beam itself, set the 35-foot long (10.7 meters), 11,000-pound (4,990 kilos) support beam in place, some 1,335 feet (407 meters) above ground level.

"You've just got to pay attention, look at your partner," said Geoghan, who plans to get married in two days. "You get used to it; you get to be very comfortable," he added.

The entire beam, including the signatures, will be covered with at least an inch of concrete that will be sprayed as fireproofing. Then the support will be hidden from view, like many of its peers, behind an interior wall for as long as One World Trade Center stands.

"It will be part of the fabric of the strongest building in the world," said Steven Plate, director of World Trade Center construction for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

The Port Authority is rebuilding Ground Zero, where nearly 3,000 perished on Sept. 11, 2001, with a memorial, a transit hub, a performing arts center, and four office towers.

The president and first lady Michelle Obama in June toured One World Trade Center, which will be the tallest office building in the Western Hemisphere when it is finished in early 2014, and inscribed the steel beam.

Obama wrote: "We remember, we rebuild, we come back stronger!" followed by his signature.

The design of One World Trade Center was overhauled to satisfy security concerns raised by the New York City Police Department, and its builders say exceptional measures have been taken to ensure its safety, including building separate safety staircases for firefighters, if needed.

"It's almost near the end. I was here as a first responder -- that pretty much says it all," said Kevin Flynn, an ironworker who signed the beam along with a number of Port Authority police officers.