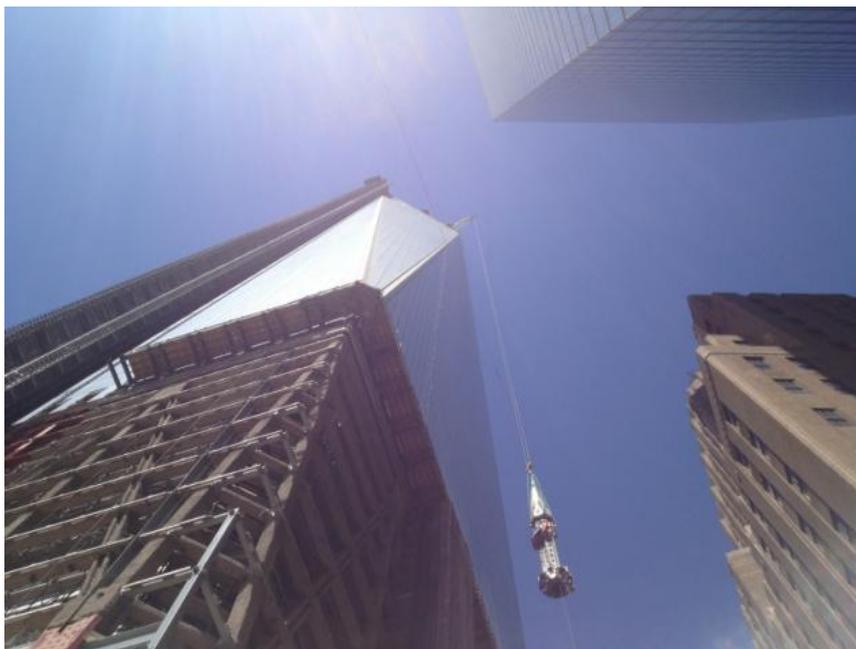


World Trade Center Workers Raise Top of the Spire in Emotional Ceremony

Hardhats take pictures and shed tears. Top of the building will be 1,776 feet above the ground.

By Edgar Sandoval



Workers at the World Trade Center Wednesday raised the spire that will top the building that will make it the tallest in the Western Hemisphere.

The flag-draped spire of the new One World Trade Center soared above the city skyline Thursday at an emotional ground zero ceremony.

Hundreds of construction workers cheered and snapped photos as they watched the tip of the mast make its way to the top of the iconic building.

“This ... is about putting the candle on the cake,” said Steven Plate, director of construction at the World Trade Center. “People committed to making this happen for the loved ones they lost — but also for the region and the world.”

It took workers about 40 minutes of careful maneuvering to set the 22-ton, 75-foot spire on its way to the top via a crane.



DAVID HANDSCHUH/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

Construction workers got emotional — and took pictures — as the spire rose, a symbolic cure for a national wound.

Construction worker James Barrows, 48, stood mesmerized as the conical capstone ascended.

“You put your heart, your sweat, your blood to the project,” Barrows said. “Seeing the American flag, my eye gets teary. It’s very joyful for our country. It means a lot.

“New York needs it. America needs it,” Barrows added.

When permanently installed, the top of the spire will be a patriotic 1,776 feet above street level.



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A crane hoisted the spire into place.

Nicole Moore, 30, cheered her construction worker pal Tommy Hickey, 31, from Brooklyn, as he clung to the cables balancing the spire before its ascent.

“Go Tommy! You're famous!” Moore shouted as cameras zeroed in on a muscular Hickey channeling Hercules.

He held on tight to keep the ropes from spinning before the spire went upward.

“It feeds good. I'm used to it,” Hickey mused about the attention. “I just needed to make sure the cables didn't spin. Feels good to see it up there. It's finally a building.”



DAVID HANDSCHUH/NEW YORK DAILY NEWS

The American flag rose along with the conical capstone.

Construction crews pulled out their smartphones to record the ascent.

“It's a great day for New York,” said Scott Lahmers, 52, who came to work at the trade center from Atlanta.

Co-worker Dennis Muia, 39, of Long Island, said it was an emotional day for everyone.

“I feel proud for New York and for our country. It's like a little piece of my heart. It means a lot to me, to everyone,” Muia said.

Phil Azzelone, 38, tried to capture the moment with his cell phone as words escaped him.

“I'm just speechless,” he said. “It feels good. It feels awesome.”