

## Anniversary will highlight inaction

Ed Pilkington in New York  
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Early tomorrow, hundreds of relatives of those who died on September 11 2001 will gather at Ground Zero to participate in a minute's silence for each of the twin towers at the moment they fell, and to listen to the names of all 2,751 World Trade Centre victims being read out. They will be joined by Barack Obama and John McCain, who have agreed to suspend their presidential tussle for the day.

Shortly before 9am, as the victims' families descend into the pit left by the fallen towers, an unintended consequence of the commemoration will be that it will refocus the world's attention on the apparent snail's pace of the reconstruction of the site. Seven years on from the events of 9/11, the rebuilding of Ground Zero remains mired in bureaucratic wrangling, cost overruns and delays.

The thousands of visitors who come to the site every week are greeted by a 16-acre hole with little sign of vertical progress. It is possible to monitor activity in real time through webcams broadcast on the internet at [earthcam.com/usa/newyork/groundzero/](http://earthcam.com/usa/newyork/groundzero/) with the most visible action being raindrops falling on the camera lens.

Part of the reason is that critical work is still being done underground, out of public view. With four major skyscrapers planned for the site, as well as a massive transport intersection and underground museum, the below-ground engineering is complex and painstaking.

Once that stage is completed, the renewal of this symbolic area of lower Manhattan should gather speed. The first steel columns acting as foundations for the Freedom Tower, the main office block that will become New York's tallest building at 1,776 ft (541 metres), were put in place in December.

Brandon Haw, the senior partner with British firm Foster+Partners in charge of the design of the second tower, is confident that the building will be completed on schedule by the beginning of 2012.

The bad news is that the overall scheme is like an intricate jigsaw in which delay to one piece can hold up all others around it. That has been exacerbated by penny-pinching on the part of cash-strapped authorities and ongoing squabbling between the port authority of New York and New Jersey, which controls most of the project, and Larry Silverstein, the property developer who owns towers 2,3 and 4.

"There has been a lot of progress on the site, but there needs to be more that restores the area to the international capital of finance and commerce that it was," said Elizabeth Berger, president of the Alliance for Downtown New York. "It's important to know when the construction challenge is going to be met."

One of the architectural gems of the plan, Santiago Calatrava's cavernous railway station, has been sent back to the drawing board, having exceeded its \$2.5bn budget by possibly several hundred million dollars.

The emotive heart of the site, a memorial consisting of two pools sitting in the footprints of the fallen Twin Towers and an underground commemorative museum, is also reported to be over budget, and may run to more than \$1bn.

The port authority has denied the allegation and says the memorial is on track to open before the 10th anniversary of the attacks, with the museum reaching completion a year later.