

Memorial shines light on pace of rebuilding

September 11, 2008
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HUNDREDS of relatives of those who died on September 11, 2001, will gather at Ground Zero today to observe a minute's silence for each of the Twin Towers at the moment they fell, and to hear the names of all 2751 World Trade Centre victims being read out.

They will be joined by presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain, who will suspend their tussle for the day.

Shortly before 9am, (11pm Melbourne time) the victims' families will descend into the pit left by the towers. An unintended consequence is that the world's attention will refocus on the apparent snail's pace of the site's reconstruction. Seven years on, the rebuilding of Ground Zero remains mired in bureaucratic wrangling, cost overruns and delays.

The thousands who visit the site every week are greeted by a 6.5-hectare hole with little sign of vertical progress.

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

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

Brandon Haw, the senior partner with the British firm in charge of the design of the second tower, is confident it will be completed by 2012. The Port Authority says the memorial is on track to open before the 10th anniversary of the attacks, and the museum a year later.

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<http://www.earthcam.com/usa/newyork/groundzero/>