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^BC-Attacks-WTC-Weather, Bjt,0750<

^World Trade Center site awash in sunlight and good weather
for now<

^Eds: NEW for PMs.<

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¶ NEW YORK (AP) _ Weather at ground zero couldn't be
better _ mid-70s, light breeze, sunny.

¶ For now, cleanup is around the clock. Cranes swivel from
dusk to dawn.

¶ That's likely to change, as soon as this weekend,
forecasters say. Rain and cold wind is on the way.

¶ In the dead of night, against the backdrop of a red-
white-and-blue Empire State Building, and amid the shredded
tangle of melted steel and warped concrete, workers toil
against time and the looming threat of climatic change:
winter.

¶ It's unspoken among the workers. These balmy days are
numbered. The slightest coating of snow could make life
difficult.

¶ "Snow will make it all the more hazardous for the
workers _ there's a lot of voids in there where they are
working," said Dan Collins, an operating engineer for the
City of New York.

¶ Men with hard hats and respirators scampered across
tentacles of splayed metal Wednesday night, pulling out
seven bodies in three hours. Excavation efforts have focused
on the "center pile," the area where One World Trade Center
once stood before it was driven into the ground.

¶ Workers say as many as seven stories of One World Trade Center that were once above ground were driven below as the building pancaked on top of itself shortly after the first fuel-heavy jetliner tunneled into it.

¶ "When the buildings fell they all mushroomed outward so the debris was lighter on the outside as opposed to right now," Collins says. "They've been working on the center pile for, I'd say a week and a half. It's gone down significantly but you can tell that it's real big and real compact from the inertia of the building coming down."

¶ Still, progress has been significant.

¶ For a week after the disaster, debris and dust covered surrounding streets. All of that is gone now, washed away by rain and workers armed with water-blasting hoses.

¶ By some estimates, up to a quarter of the debris has been removed. Others say it's nearer to one-tenth.

Projections for completing the cleanup range from spring to next winter

¶ "It'll take a year easily," said Vincent Berlingerio, a laborer working at ground zero. "And after today I think we're going to get laid off. They are cutting down the crews."

¶ Benny Venturi, a carpenter boarding up windows on the nearby Merrill Lynch building, says the difference is noticeable.

¶ "They really did a lot of work this last weekend, more of the metal is gone and they are breaking up the concrete because you can see the pillars," Venturi said. "In one word, it definitely looks like 'removal.'"

¶ Collins agrees, as he surveys the landscape, which at night is lit by bright halogen lamps.

¶ "They've done a lot in terms of removal, but when I see a diagram of how far down into the ground it goes, you realize there is just so much stuff," Collins says, his overalls dusted by fine powder. "You figure it took six years to build it, even if they run around the clock like they are doing, it's going to take a year to clean it all."

¶ Daylight fades as the sun sets over a heap as wide a Yankee stadium. The swath is narrowing. The days are growing shorter, the nights growing colder. Heavy machinery and an arsenal of backhoes and excavators teeter over the heap.

¶ They scrape away at the surface, which still burns a thousand degrees in some spots, perhaps hot enough to keep things warm in the dead of winter, and under coldness of artificial lights.