

On this date in 1775, the post office was created. The nation's first chief mailman was Benjamin Franklin!



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Wait-and-See Altitude

Cleaning Dirt, Breaking Ground and Other Concrete Facts About Putting Up an Office Building

It takes a long time — and a lot of steel — to put up a building. At KidsPost, we have been enjoying a bird's-eye view (well, almost) of a 12-story office building going up right next door. The project got underway in May 2005 and is scheduled to be finished next July.

For a while we looked out our windows (near the A in the word "Altitude" at left) at a giant hole in the ground, but now the structure is beginning to rise. We thought this was a great opportunity to learn a little of what it takes to put up a building. KidsPost's **Margaret Webb Pressler** found out some fun facts about the construction. And we'll keep taking pictures to show you the progress!

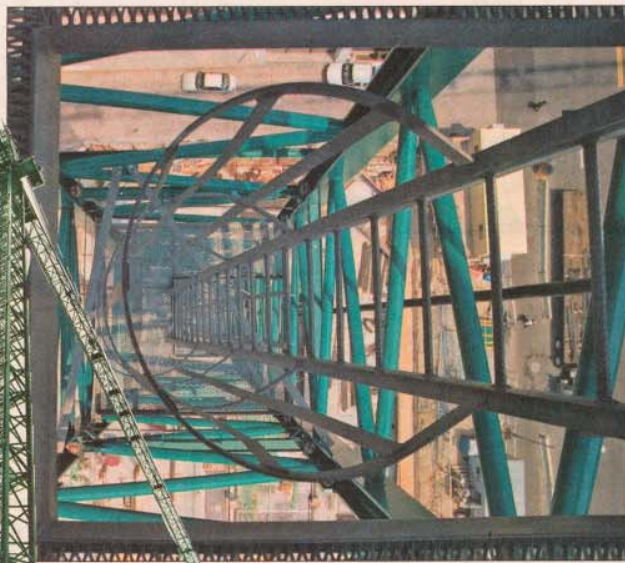


▲ There are 50 to 60 workers and supervisors at the site most workdays, says project manager Carlos Lizama. But those workers look like ants in this picture, taken from the top of the green crane almost 300 feet above the construction site. How many workers can you see?

■ More than 1,000 truckloads of dirt have been hauled away. A typical truck can hold 25,000 pounds of dirt, so that's a total of 25 million pounds! Where did all that dirt go? It was contaminated by old, underground oil tanks, so it had to be cleaned — then sent to a landfill.



▲ What was a big hole in the ground in April is filling up, like water in a pool. The basement and parking garage are in the top two photos. Below, work has started on the first floors.



■ More than half of the men working at this site helped rebuild the Pentagon after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attack.

▼ **Elio F. Figueroa** of Beltsville loves operating the crane all day. He said his sons, who are 2 and 6, wish they could see for themselves where Dad works!



■ The completed building will have 1,540 tons of steel. A ton is 2,000 pounds. Can you do the math?

■ The structure requires 51,558 cubic yards of concrete.

▲ It takes the crane operator about 10 minutes to climb the 250 steps to his cab — where he spends eight

to 10 hours a day. The view is great, and he has a tiny TV, but there is no bathroom! (Let's just say he keeps a jug nearby.)

■ Workers down below put the crane operator's lunch on the crane's giant hook. He pulls it up, then reaches out and grabs it.

PHOTOS BY BILL WEBSTER — THE WASHINGTON POST