



WGN Chicago News



Larry Potash, Valerie Warner, Joe Burns & Anna Belaval



Joe Burns & Anna Belaval

WGN: Time now for "around town". Anna is at the construction site for the Chicago Spire. Hey Anna.

WGN: How cool does this look? Check this out. I am sixty feet deep into the ground. And we went down all these stairs, it was six stories pretty much right Joe?

JB: Yep, we are about six stories down now.

WGN: Everybody, this is Joe Burns, he is with the engineering company, the structural engineers. So where am I right now?

JB: We are at the bottom of the coffer dam of the Spire. A coffer dam is a temporary hole we are digging in order to put in the central core of the building. The core is the shaft that includes the elevators, stairs, the utilities that will support all of the buildings and get us up to the top of the building.

WGN: We have some video, some animation of what you have been doing because underground where we're standing there are already around twenty caissons.

JB: Twenty rock caissons. These are columns that go to the bedrock which is about 110 feet from the street level, and that will support the weight of the tower. We have a total of thirty four of these caissons which are ten foot diameter concrete columns, think of them that way. We have twenty of them here to support the middle of the building and we have fourteen around the perimeter that hold up the outside columns of the building.

WGN: What's great about the Spire is that when it's finally built in 2011, you won't see anything but the Spire, no parking lot, no nothing. Just a park and this tall, tall building right?

JB: That's right as you look around us, this is all temporary. This will go away as we build the parking.

WGN: Is that safe?

JB: Of course it's safe. It will come out when we dig down, and all the earth around this will become parking 1500 cars to support all the people who live in the tower.

WGN: How happy are you that thirty percent of the building is already sold?



Spire Construction



Spire Animation



Spire Animation

WGN: Were you a little afraid that if it wasn't going to sell you were going to have to bring all this down?

JB: No, no, never in doubt.

WGN: What is the biggest challenge, Joe, of a structure like this?

JB: There are two big challenges. One is building this tall, 2000 feet. This is a super high rise building and the challenge to support it against wind and gravity and everything like that. But the other [thing is] in Chicago is foundations. This is the deepest basement that anyone has ever put in Chicago.

WGN: And it's flooding already.

JB: It's not flooding, this is water that seeps in we're going to pump it away. You can see the caisson over there, there is one of the twenty that is out of the ground, and we are using that as a sump to pump the water away. The video that the viewers are watching shows the actual intonation of the bathtub around, the basement wall that will be the permanent basement wall. I think the video also showed the installation of this coffer dam.

WGN: Yes it did, thank you so much Joe.

JB: You're welcome.

WGN: When we come back we are going to go outside and play a little more in this construction site which is unbelievable and one of a kind. Back to you guys.