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DRIVERS GOING



GETTING DIRECTIONS: Martina Devlin asks a police officer the best way to maneuver around partially closed lower Manhattan early yesterday morning. AP



SUBWAY RIDE: It was back-to-work and back-to-school day for passengers on the No. 2 train yesterday. N.Y. Post: Jennifer Weisbord



CHECKPOINT: A National Guardsman and cop check the IDs of workers at their office buildings in the Financial District yesterday morning. N.Y. Post: Charles Wenzelberg

Terror fears remain at the Empire State

By JOHN LEHMANN and ANDY GELLER

Now that their skyscraper is again the tallest in the Big Apple, workers at the Empire State Building are understandably jittery.

Employees have to go through metal detectors and show ID — which can mean standing in line for 40 minutes — but it isn't enough to erase fears that terrorists might target the 102-story landmark.

"This is now the tallest building in Manhattan. It's very conspicuous," said Erin O'Brien, 33, who works for a law firm on the 60th floor.

"I'm feeling nervous. If I can't get over this anxiety, I don't know if I can keep working here."

Liliya Shapiro, 41, shared O'Brien's anxiety.

"Now when you see airplanes fly over, you just wonder, 'Is something going to happen?' I can't seem to get it out of my mind."

"I can't help feeling a little edgy," agreed Michelle Kim, 30, who works for a travel agency on the 40th floor. "Things just don't feel like they used to."

After shutting down because of last Tuesday's terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, the skyscraper reopened Thursday with much tighter security.

The famed 86th-floor observation deck — site of a 1997 terrorist shooting — is temporarily closed.

And everybody has to go through metal detectors and show ID to get in, a rule that previously applied only to tourists bound for the observatory.

The 20,000 people who work in the building have to use the main entrance on Fifth Avenue and 34th Street — which created a line of people four deep stretching around the block yesterday morning.

It took Ronnette Riley, who owns an architectural firm on the 80th floor, 40 minutes to get in.

"Any icon as visual as this will always be a target," Riley said.

But she has confidence in the new security measures and said the building is far stronger than the World Trade Center because its columns are encased in concrete.

The skyscraper, she noted, survived being hit by a plane during a thick fog on July 20, 1945. Fourteen people were killed.

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