

Engineer: Worker's bid to save crane in Superstorm Sandy led to broken boom over NYC

By Ron Gallagher | August 12, 2014



Dive Brief:

- A worker who secured a rooftop crane on the One57 tower in Manhattan to ride out Superstorm Sandy, prevented it from "weather-vaning freely," which caused the accident, an accident-investigation expert says.
- Jim D. Wiethorn, who leads Haag Engineering and visited the site immediately after the storm, agrees that an operator left the crane free to rotate with the winds, which is recommended practice, but someone else used some safety lines to tie the rotating part of the crane in place at its base, and the boom broke off and dangled over West 57th Street in a scene that became emblematic of Sandy.
- Wiethorn is alone in his explanation so far, with the contractor, the developer, and the crane owner saying nothing beyond their certainty that the operator left the controls set correctly. The City of New York has also said it has not closed its investigation yet.

Dive Insight:

We probably will have to wait until the flurry of lawsuits have settled before finding out if anyone else is in agreement with Wiethorn's thesis that some worker who "had no idea what he was doing" doomed the crane by trying to secure it against the blow. The One57 accident is one of the cases in Wiethorn's book, "Crane Accidents: A Study of Causes & Trends To Create a Safer Work Environment."

Recommended Reading

ENR.com: [Human Error Caused Superstorm Sandy Crane Failure, Expert Says](#)

Top Image Credit: [JSR694](#)