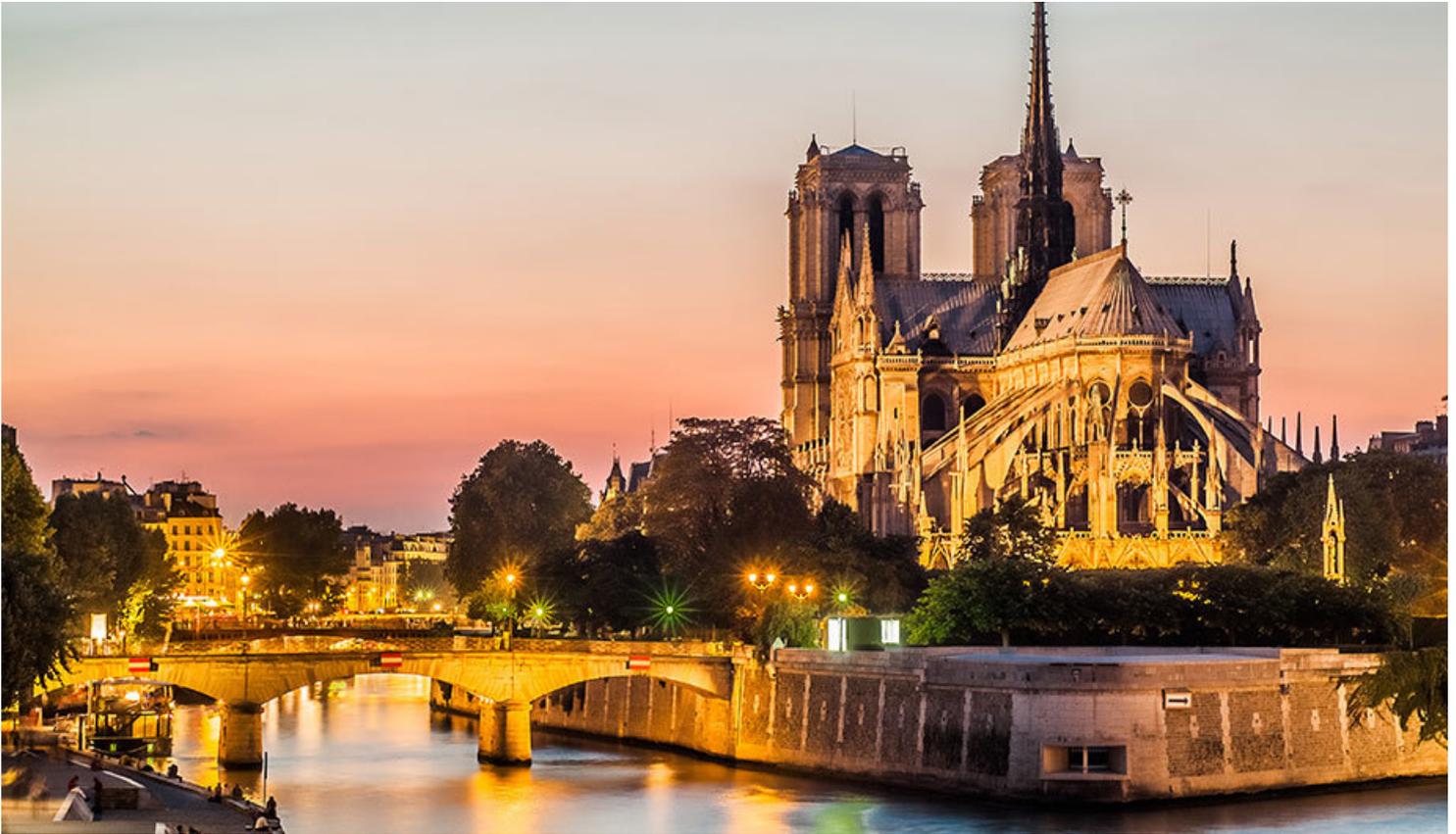


Firefighters Save Notre Dame Cathedral From Total Destruction

Published on 2 May 2019



Firefighters bravely worked through the night on April 15, 2019, to control and extinguish a fire that was threatening to destroy the beautiful and historic Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris. Working nine hours into the early hours of April 16 to extinguish the fire, firefighters are credited with saving the 850-year-old architectural masterpiece from complete destruction, and with rescuing the historic relics and artwork inside the cathedral.

500 Firefighters Involved

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo heralded the firefighters and other emergency workers at a ceremony April 18

French President Emmanuel Macron called the firefighters' work "exemplary" in a ceremony April 18 at Elysee Palace. Some 500 firefighters were involved in the effort, and about 250 were

present when Macron recognized them and said they would be awarded France's Golden Medal of Honor to recognize their courage and devotion.

Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo also heralded the firefighters and other emergency workers at a ceremony April 18 at Paris City Hall. She gave the first responders the title "Citizens of Honor" at the ceremony because of their courage and determination.

The Role of Technology

Technology – robots and drones – also played a role in saving Notre Dame from complete destruction. Drones flew above the cathedral and provided video footage to guide firefighters.

A 1,100-lb. robot, called Colossus, was deployed inside the building where it was too dangerous for firefighters to go. The robot is equipped with cameras to enable firefighters to see what's happening within danger zones where there is high risk of smoke, burns or falling debris. The robot also directed jets of water, controlled by firefighters outside the cathedral.

Strategy Involved

The firefighters' strategy is credited with saving the building. Firefighters decided to give up on saving the roof, as it was engulfed by flames. They turned their efforts to saving the cathedral's Gothic towers.

In the end the fire destroyed centuries-old oak beams that supported the cathedral's stone ceiling, thus weakening the building. *"It's a miracle that the cathedral is still standing and that all the relics were saved,"* Lt. Col. Gabriel Plus, a fire brigade spokesman, told The Associated Press.

The Cause: A Computer Glitch

Cause of the fire has been reported as related to a project to renovate the steeple. It has also been reported that a computer glitch and/or an electrical short-circuit (possibly in an elevator) played a role.

A flood of donations has jump-started the rebuilding efforts for Notre Dame Cathedral

The fire was first reported when a fire alarm was triggered at 6:20 p.m. on April 15, but no fire was discovered. By 6:43 p.m., another alarm sounded. A Paris newspaper reported that a computer glitch might have misdirected firefighters responding to the initial alarm.

Addressing firefighters on April 18, Paris Mayor Hidalgo said: *“The night of April 15, we saw your courage without limit, your determination without fault. We saw the moment when you decided to take on all the risk to save Notre Dame, a work of humanity.”* The comment was reported by NBC News.

Rebuilding The Cathedral

A flood of donations has jump-started the rebuilding efforts for Notre Dame Cathedral. Almost a billion dollars has been donated, including donations from wealthy families, corporations, institutions and individuals.

President Macron has set a goal of completing repairs within five years – in time for the 2024 Paris Olympics, although there is some skepticism the work can be completed so fast. There are also questions now about the nature of the renovations – whether they will seek to duplicate the previous structure exactly or replace it with alternative designs.

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