



INFORMATION BULLETIN

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Whistler Blackcomb Excalibur Gondola Incident – Report Released

Investigation Concluded BC Safety Authority makes Six Recommendations

Regulated Technology: Passenger Ropeways

Date of Issue: July 13, 2010

Topic: The BC Safety Authority (BCSA) has released a report detailing the causes, key findings and recommendations following an 18-month investigation into the 2008 Excalibur Gondola ice-jacking incident at Whistler Blackcomb.

Upon conclusion of its investigation, the BCSA confirms that water did enter Tower Four of the Excalibur Gondola, which froze and expanded causing the collapse. As a result six recommendations have been released, and one new Safety Order has been issued.

BACKGROUND:

- Tower # 4 of the Excalibur Gondola (Whistler Blackcomb) collapsed on Dec 16, 2008. The top section of the tower separated from the lower section.
- Based on reports received during the incident investigation, 12 of the 43 passengers riding the lift were injured. Six of the 43 cabins were damaged.
- The report confirms that water entered the tower's cavity. It notes that water may have passed through a plate connecting the tower's upper and lower sections. A rectangular opening on the plate, used to allow the pouring of concrete, and a flame-cut bolt hole are thought to have provided a pathway for water to enter the tower.
- The report confirms that unusually cold temperatures in the Whistler area before the incident froze the water which had collected in the lower section of the tower. The ice then expanded inside the cavity, pushing against the walls and the plate causing the tower to collapse.
- Safety orders have been issued to industry to address the recommendation related to the primary cause of the incident.

As a result of the investigation, six recommendations have been made to help prevent a similar incident from happening again:

1. All ski hill towers in BC must be fitted with drain holes or other means to prevent the accumulation of water, as required by the national standard.
2. Manufacturers must make sure that required inspection procedures are clearly communicated.
3. Contractors must make sure that manufacturers' safety bulletins are followed by staff, and that inspection and test results are properly documented.
4. Manufacturers must make sure that "as built conditions" are documented and transferred to the owner and operator during installation.
5. The BCSA will submit its findings to the national CAN/CSA Z98 Technical Committee for review and possible code changes.
6. The BCSA will improve processes to make sure its safety officers are aware of and document manufacturers' safety bulletins.

Please refer to the Excalibur Gondola Incident Report, released July 2010.



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News Release link: <http://www.safetyauthority.ca/news/safety-authority-makes-six-recommendations-following-investigation-ski-lift-tower-ice-jacking>

Full report link: <http://www.safetyauthority.ca/Excalibur%20Report%20-%20Whistler%20Blackcomb%2012-July-2010%20Final%20Report%20with%20Appendices.pdf>