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22 March 2012

Mr Derek LO
Clerk to Panel on Economic Development
Legislative Council Secretariat
Legislative Council Complex
1 Legislative Council Road
Central, Hong Kong

Dear Mr LO,

Panel on Economic Development

Follow-up to the meeting on 27 February 2012
"Breakdown of Ngong Ping 360 ropeway occurring in December 2011 and January 2012"

As requested by members during the captioned meeting regarding the recent spate of incidents on Ngong Ping 360 ropeway in December 2011 and January 2012 and its follow-up work, we would like to provide further information for the Panel's reference as follows:

(a) Written response provided by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) to the letter from Hon Fred LI and Hon Emily LAU dated 24 February 2012 is at Annex 1.

(b) Regarding the viability of effecting two-way in-cabin communication, the Ngong Ping 360 Limited (NP360)'s response is at Annex 2.

(c) The NP360 has put in place a reporting mechanism. The NP360 is required to inform the EMSD, the Tourism Commission, the Transport Department, the Fire Services Department (FSD) and the Hong Kong Police Force within 30 minutes of an occurrence of suspension of cable car service that is expected to last for 30 minutes or more, so that relevant government departments are kept abreast of the latest developments and can provide the necessary advice and support. For the rescue plan for rescuing in-cabin guests, information provided by the FSD is at Annex 3.

The investigation report of the breakdown incidents is not yet available as the investigation by the EMSD is still underway. We will submit the report to the Panel for reference once it is available.

Yours sincerely,

(Mrs Miranda YIM)
for Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development

c.c.

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Annex 1

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department's Response to Hon Fred LI's and Hon Emily LAU's Letter of 24 February 2012 on the Ngong Ping 360 Ropeway

1. For the incident on 8 December 2011, deformation of the internal surface of the haul rope sheave lining in the Ngong Ping Terminal was found. The acceptable lining thickness recommended by the manufacturer did not appear to be sufficient to prevent failure of the lining, and the replacement of the lining may not therefore be timely. The incident suggested that there was room for improvement on the maintenance guidelines for the lining. The Ngong Ping 360 Limited (NP360) has made improvement in the maintenance of the concerned lining and has tightened the acceptance criteria for lining thickness to avoid recurrence of similar incidents.

2. For the service suspension incident on 18 December 2011, a small scale roller bearing of the cabin transportation system in the Tung Chung Terminal was found not operating smoothly during routine patrol. The cable car operation was temporarily stopped to carry out examination and replacement of the faulty bearing. As regards the cause for the fault, it could not be ascertained whether the particular bearing was sub-standard or due to its unsatisfactory installation. Notwithstanding this, in order to avoid recurrence of similar problems, the NP360 has already replaced all the 12 bearings of the same type, and reviewed the maintenance arrangement and shortened the replacement schedule.

   The incident of 25 January 2012 was caused by a worn bullwheel bearing at the Airport Island Angle Station and did not involve the faulty parts that caused the incidents in last December. The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) is currently conducting an independent investigation of the incident to identify the possible causes of the failure of the concerned bullwheel bearing.

3. A fault occurred at the cabin spacer of the Ngong Ping Terminal on 22 December 2011. Upon examination, the lubricant oil level of the planetary gearbox of the spacer was found low. It is believed that during the regular inspection of the cabin spacer last conducted on 13 December 2011, the NP360 did not notice that the lubricant oil level was relatively low. This incident might be related to the NP360's maintenance procedures. The EMSD instructed the NP360 on 23 December 2011 to

conduct a comprehensive review of the maintenance regime of the cable car installations. The NP360 has arranged its maintenance staff to attend revision courses and drawn their attention to the essential points to note when inspecting the cabin spacer.

Electrical and Mechanical Services Department
March 2012

Annex 2

Ngong Ping 360 Limited's Response to the Viability of Effecting Two-way In-cabin Communication

The Ngong Ping 360 Limited (NP360) appreciates the views of the public and admits there is room for improvement in its communication system. The NP360 is actively reviewing its contingency handling measures, communication with guests, notification arrangements, etc and will implement improvement measures.

2. The NP360 has studied the viability of introducing a two-way in-cabin communication system in each cable car. In doing so, the likelihood of serious jamming of communication lines that will occur when a large number of in-cabin guests attempt to contact the control centre concurrently during an incident cannot be ignored. Having considered this, the NP360 does not consider introducing two-way in-cabin communication an effective means.

3. After review, the NP360 considers that the following means would be more effective in enhancing the communication with passengers:

(a) Additional live broadcasts will be disseminated from the control centre to cabin guests during incidents so that all guests on board will be provided with latest information;
(b) Passengers can contact the NP360 through the hotline as already displayed in every cabin. The NP360 will engage a hotline service centre so that the hotline capacity will be increased during an incident for speedy handling of passengers' enquiries; and
(c) The NP360 will strengthen its training to enhance staff's skills in handling incidents so as to provide information and support to passengers in a more effective manner.

Ngong Ping 360 Limited
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Annex 3

Fire Services Department's Rescue Plan for Ngong Ping 360 Ropeway

During the occurrence of a ropeway incident, passengers may not need to be evacuated immediately from the cabin at height to the ground, unless there are passengers suffering from acute sickness or encountering life threatening situations.

2. Upon receipt of notification from the Ngong Ping 360 Limited (NP 360) of an incident, the Fire Services Department (FSD) will first send its Fire Services personnel and a fire appliance nearby to the terminal for situation appraisal and liaison. Once it is confirmed that there are passengers suffering from acute sickness or encountering life threatening situations, the FSD will summon additional manpower, fire appliances and ambulances, and commence joint rescue operation with the NP 360 and the Civil Aid Service (CAS). If necessary, assistance from the Government Flying Service (GFS) will also be summoned.

3. Depending on the prevailing situation and conditions, Fire Services personnel together with the NP 360, the GFS and the CAS will carry out rescue operation jointly to pluck the passenger from distress. The rescuer will enter the cabin and release the passenger from the cabin to the ground by the following modes of rescue as appropriate :

- A rescue carrier from the designated tower will be moved to the rescuee's cabin so that the rescuee will be transferred to the rescue carrier. The rescue carrier will be returned to the tower, and the rescuee will be conveyed to the ground through the tower's staircase; or

- The rescuer will ascend the tower nearest to the cabin in question, descent from the tower along the haul rope to the top of the cabin, and enter the cabin. The rescuee will be lowered directly from the cabin to the ground by using descender, safety harness and safety line.

4. Where necessary, the GFS will convey the passenger in distress to the nearby hospital.

Fire Services Department
March 2012