

**For discussion on
23 April 2012**

Legislative Council Panel on Economic Development

Follow-up to the Ngong Ping 360 ropeway incidents and update on its resumption of service

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on the Government's follow-up work to the recent incidents of the Ngong Ping 360 (NP360) ropeway, including the comprehensive investigation conducted by the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) into the cable car incident on 25 January 2012, and updates Members on the operations of the NP360 after its resumption of service.

Follow-up Work

2. The EMSD completed an independent investigation into the NP360 cable car incident of 25 January, and released the investigation report on 3 April. The report also covered EMSD's findings on the three service disruption incidents occurred in December 2011 and the improvement measures taken by NP360, and confirmed that those incidents were not related to the concerned components of the ropeway incident of 25 January. On 5 April, we submitted the relevant report to the Panel on Economic Development for reference. The report has been uploaded onto the website of EMSD.

Investigation Report

3. The EMSD pointed out in the report that the accident was due to the irregular spalling in the inner race of the bearing of bull wheel no. 4 of the cable car system and the uneven wearing out of the linings of that bull wheel. This had caused vibration of the haul rope which in turn triggered the position sensor of the bull wheel to stop the cable car's operation. Examination of the lubricating grease collected from the bull wheel bearing revealed that water was present in relatively large quantities in the grease, which had degraded the lubrication effect and caused spalling of the bearing.

4. To prevent recurrence of similar incidents, the report pointed out that the NP360 had to implement the following improvement measures before resuming cable car service:

- replace all bull wheel bearings;
- enhance the vibration monitoring system of all bull wheel bearings to capture data on an ongoing basis, and increase the frequency of examination of the collected data to once every two weeks;
- conduct monthly grease analyses to monitor the moisture and metal contents of the lubricating grease and step up the regreasing frequency according to the result;
- store and handle lubricating grease properly to prevent ingress of moisture;
- check and re-grease all bearings of the ropeway system;
- tighten the procedure for inspection and replacement of the bull wheel linings;
- conduct a comprehensive review of the maintenance regime of the cable car system and complete the action items identified;
- enhance the emergency handling procedures, and provide staff with regular training to ensure their quick and appropriate response to unforeseen incidents; and
- carry out an annual examination of the cable car system to ensure a satisfactory result.

5. After conducting on-site examinations of all the improvement measures, the EMSD confirmed that the required measures had been implemented satisfactorily and could effectively prevent recurrence of similar incidents and enhance the reliability of the ropeway system. Therefore, the EMSD agreed to NP360's resumption of cable car service on 5 April.

Enhancement of Contingency Response Mechanism and Communication Arrangements

6. In addition, throughout the past two months, the Tourism Commission (TC) together with the EMSD convened a number of meetings with the management of the NP360 and the Mass Transit Railway Corporation

Limited (MTRCL) so as to closely monitor and supervise the NP360 to ensure that it had put in place the series of enhancement measures before resuming ropeway service. On the enhancement of the contingency response mechanism, the TC worked closely with the relevant government departments (including the Transport Department, the Fire Services Department and the Police) in assisting the NP360 to review thoroughly its incident response measures, as well as in urging the company to update all its contingency response manuals, to flexibly deploy emergency buses in carrying passengers leaving Ngong Ping, to upgrade the in-cabin emergency packs, etc. For communication arrangements, we note that the NP360 has enabled live announcements from its control centre to the cabins, and has engaged the service of a hotline centre for providing multiple hotlines during incidents. Besides, the NP360 has strengthened its communication with the tourism industry by establishing a database to facilitate updating the Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB), the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, local tour guides, etc via RSS Feed, telephone calls and SMS, so as to help raise the standard of service of the NP360.

Consistent Implementation of Enhancement Measures

7. On reviewing the incident of 25 January, the Government considered that the NP360 showed inadequacies in its contingency response arrangements and in monitoring its staff to discharge the repair and maintenance works in a serious and diligent manner. The management of NP360 must learn from the lessons and continue to implement all the enhancement measures seriously. We have asked the MTRCL to strengthen its monitoring of NP360's daily operation, and to urge the NP360 management to step up its efforts to closely and thoroughly supervise its staff in discharging their duties in a professional and diligent manner, so as to ensure that the improvement measures of the ropeway maintenance programme, the emergency handling procedures, as well as the communication mechanism are strictly and consistently followed. The EMSD will continue to closely monitor the operations and maintenance of the cable car system to ensure the safe operation of the ropeway. The TC, together with the EMSD and other relevant government departments, will continue to closely monitor the operations and services of NP360 to ensure that it would implement the enhancement measures in various aspects on an ongoing basis, so as to maintain service reliability and stability.

Update after Resumption of Service

Visitor Number

8. According to NP360, the passenger number after re-opening of the ropeway has gradually restored to the level before its service suspension, i.e.

around 7,000 during holidays, and around 4,000 during non-holidays. The number of tour groups has reached almost 80% of the level before service suspension. The NP360 will continue to launch a series of marketing activities to encourage more visitors to take the cable car ride and visit the Ngong Ping Village.

9. On the day of service resumption, thunderstorm warning was issued at 14:01 and the ropeway service was temporarily suspended as a result. Cable car operation was resumed in the same afternoon at 16:15. Some visitors reflected that, during the service disruption, the signage for the shuttle bus stop was unclear and the waiting time for the shuttle bus was quite long. In handling similar cases in the future, the NP360 management company will arrange its staff to guide visitors inside and outside the Ngong Ping Village to the shuttle bus stop. Also, the company will continue to co-operate with the New Lantao Bus to speed up passenger flow in the event of service disruption.

Publicity and promotion arrangement

10. The NP360 launches a series of promotions in April and May. They include the “360 Pogo Jumpathon” in the Ngong Ping Village, and the “Ngong Ping 360 Cash Coupon” promotion programme. It will continue to care for the community and work with various organisations to participate in or co-organise environmental and charitable activities. For overseas promotion, the company will work with the HKTB in publicising and promoting the NP360 to the overseas travel trade. It will also actively participate in exhibitions organised by the overseas travel trade.

11. We actively encourage the NP360 to collaborate with the HKTB and the tourism industry in launching different marketing activities and promotion, with a view to rebuilding visitors’ confidence and maintaining the status of the NP360 cable car as a major tourist attraction.

Tourism Commission, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau
Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

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