



Manless operation of aerial ropeways

Thibault CHATELUS
STRMTG / Ropeway Division





Operation of aerial ropeways without present staff



- Definition / introduction / examples
- Regulations
- How to ensure the same safety level as with an operator in every station ?
- Feedback from STRMTG on such systems



Operation of aerial ropeways without present staff



- On « usual » installations, one or more operators in every ropeway station, and in certain cases in big vehicles
- On the more rare installations without present staff, it doesn't mean that the operation is totally manless, but there isn't an operator in every station
- Main question : keeping the same safety level as with the operator, on the various aspects of her/his monitoring/management missions :
 - Safety of passengers in the stations :
 - In link with the installation,
 - Interface with cabins, loading/unloading,
 - Embarked weight,
 - Weather conditions,
 - Alarms and automatic stops, and resetting them,
 - Evacuation,
 - Fire risk.



Examples of aerial ropeways in France without present staff



- Jigback operation :
 - Funitel « Trois Vallées (Bouquetin) » in Val Thorens – POMA – 2003
 - Gondola « Télébuffette » in Montchavin – Leitner – 2008
 - Funitel « Thorens » in Val Thorens – BMF – 2011
 - Gondola « Petit Moriond » in Courchevel – POMA – 2012
 - Jigback cable car « Dahu » in les Arcs – BMF – 2015
 - Jigback cable car in Brest – BMF – 2016
 - *Jigback cable car project in Orléans – POMA – 2018*
- Continuous movement operation :
 - Gondola « Cairn-Caron » in Val Thorens – Doppelmayr – 2007
 - *Gondola project « Moraine » in Val Thorens – Doppelmayr – 2017*
- Installations used as examples throughout the rest of the presentation



Where is the operator ?

- Only one operator in a station for several stations on the installation
- (Cairn-Caron, Trois Vallées)
- Operator positionned and already supervising another installation
- (Thorens, Moraine project)
- Operator in a remote control room
- (Dahu, Brest, Orléans project)
- Choice sometimes possible between these options
- (Télébuffette, Petit Moriond)



- FT Thorens : photo taken from chairlift Portette top station, operator position



Regulations



- No special mention or treatment in the EN standards
- In french texts, a few recent evolutions in RM1 regulation guide :
 - Possibility to operate with cabins >40people without staff on board, but with bidirectionnal communication equipments with an operator
 - Not referring to the installation driver anymore, but to the driving missions, in link with the Safety Management Systems
 - But otherwise, no particular explicit specifications on systems without present staff
- French control authorities (STRMTG) ask for a special risk analysis for operation without staff, with the following main attention points...



Passenger safety in stations in link with the aerial ropeway



- Turning parts must be unreachable
- (Prevention of abnormal behaviours, especially for urban uses)



→ TPH Brest, Jean Moulin station



Passenger / cabin interface for jigback operation



- Risks : passenger falling from the platform, going under a cabin, stuck in the doors while cabin departing
- Most obvious solution : Platform Screen Doors (PSDs)
 - Or combination of:
 - Immaterial barriers detecting falls (not too high) from the platform
 - Detection of bad loadings
 - In both cases, alarm / stopping buttons accessible to users on the platforms, discussion on what they do depending on cabin position



→ FT Trois Vallées – Bouquetin : bottom pit and platform detection cells



Passenger/cabin interface for continuous movement operation

- Gondola Cairn-Caron, managed by a « moving cabin wall » in the station :
 - Special parts on the side of the cabins avoiding gaps between cabins
 - Chain with fingers in the upper part ensuring vehicle spacement
 - Sensitive area at the end of the platform to stop in case of bad loading/unloading
- New systems in development for new projects



→ TC Cairn-Caron,
top of Cairn station





Embarked weight management

- Needed to ensure absence of overweight / conditions of use of the cabins
- As nobody can estimate the number of embarked passengers on-site or control people going over counting barriers for jigbacks, need for :
 - physical limitation inside the cabins,
 - and/or an integrated control system preventing departure in case of overweight (often already used to calculate cabin with 3500N/m^2)



→ FT Thorens



Management of weather conditions



- Compared to an usual installation, as the operator may not « feel » the conditions in every station :
 - Increased importance of wind sensors, possibly with intermediate alarms before stopping the installation,
 - Increased importance of checking weather forecast / reports daily before operation to know likely conditions to expect,
 - Increased importance of the daily morning visit before operation (for ex if it snowed the night before),
 - Video cameras in stations and possibly on the line to see what happens



→ FT Bouquetin



Management of alarms / automatic stops



- A few of them are resettable remotely, but the most critical are not !
- Necessity of operator on-site for many alarms / stops, and necessity of a limited / well-defined delay for the operator to come
- Examples of usual discussions on alarms on such systems :
 - Resettable remotely after a passenger alarm button on the platform (classical subject on automatic underground railway systems) ?...
 - ...and should the system stop or not depending on the cabin position ?
 - Automatic stop due to a short gust of wind : when to reset, from where, and relaunch with which speed ?



Evacuation

- With PSDs, question of passenger auto-evacuation when the cabin is stopped close enough from the station
- It should be possible to unlock the door from inside the cabin, and not dangerous to get out



- TPH Brest, Capucins and Jean Moulin stations





Fire risk management



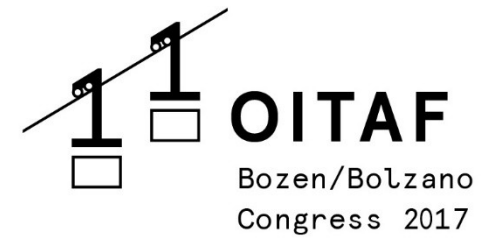
- Need for a specific risk analysis for each installation (real risk under the line / in the stations, cycle time, ...)
- Early detection of the fire can't be done by the operator, especially in/near stations...
- ...hence importance of the communication system with the passengers, particularly in case of operator in a remote control center and/or in cities
- Questions raised in link with « fire emergency mode » without staff in the station :
 - In case of fire, should it be triggered straight away, or would ending the current cycle and blocking next departure be enough first ?
 - Where are the triggers for the « fire emergency mode » ?
 - On-site → more time to reach them,
 - Remote → complicated to secure the link, including fire-proof it



STRMTG feedback on aerial ropeway operation without present staff



- No serious incident so far, but few such installations in service
- Few occurrences of an operator having to access on-site to solve a problem
- The safety analysis demonstrates that safety level is at least as good as an installation with present staff
- (Cost efficiency : more complicated systems, so more expensive to conceive / build)
- A ropeway without present staff is a complex system, it should not be handled as an elevator or an escalator !
- Usual staffed ropeway reflexes must be kept, in particular to reset alarms / automats and manage weather conditions
- The operation without staff should remain an operation mode the operator can give up at any moment



Thanks for
your
attention

Bozen/Bolzano 6 - 9 June 2017

