

Heavenly agrees to settle zipline death case

By Andy Furillo, Sacramento Bee

After a honeymoon hike at Heavenly Mountain Resort, Mark and Rebecca Dickson were riding the chairlift down the hill, laughing and talking about their lunch plans, when the newlyweds saw a blue rope flutter ahead of them in the stiff afternoon.

“And then I heard my husband say, ‘This is not good,’” Rebecca Dickson recalled in an interview Tuesday.

The rope had broken off from Lake Tahoe’s Heavenly Flyer ZipRider line that ran parallel to the lift about 100 yards away. The fluttering rope wrapped around the couple’s chair, which swung back and forth so violently in the entanglement that Mark Dickson, who was 51, fell out of his seat and to his death in the rocks about 40 feet below.

Rebecca Dickson and Mark Dickson’s two sons from a previous marriage sued, and in September they settled the wrongful death case in El Dorado County Superior Court.

A confidentiality agreement has kept the financial terms of the settlement under wraps. The plaintiffs had asked for \$15 million in a settlement conference in June, according to documents they filed ahead of a court hearing.

But, while the payout has been kept secret, the settlement does allow the Dicksons’ attorneys to reveal a list of Heavenly’s acknowledgments about the facts surrounding the Aug. 31, 2009, accident.

Under terms of the deal, Heavenly’s owners agreed to make a number of safety-related changes, including ones that call for

strengthened drug and alcohol testing of the people who run the Heavenly Flyer, regular equipment inspections and shutting down the ride in high winds.

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