

Dozens evacuated from Heavenly chairlift



Comet chair at Heavenly is popular with skiers on the Nevada side. Photo Copyright 2017 Carolyn E. Wright

By Kathryn Reed

No one was injured New Year's Day when the entire Comet Express chairlift at Heavenly Mountain Resort had to be evacuated.

It came to a stop in the late morning because of mechanical problems.

"Heavenly lift maintenance personnel are currently assessing the mechanical issue and stoppage, and will continue to work in conjunction with state and regulatory agencies until all

issues are resolved," Coop Cooper told *Lake Tahoe News* in a prepared statement.

It is not known when the lift, which is one of the more popular chairs on the Nevada side, will resume operations.

A witness said it appeared to be an orderly evacuation of the lift, with no one seeming to panic. Heavenly did not release how many people were on the chairlift when it stopped.

While this chair appeared to have people in every seat, overall the mountain was not very crowded on New Year's Day.

Per the resort's agreement with the U.S. Forest Service, Heavenly's personnel must be able to handle such an evacuation on their own. And that's just what happened on Sunday. No outside agencies were involved with the rescue.

"Between each pole they seemed to have a separate team of about three people. They looped a rope and some sort of harness, I'll call it a T-bar," Steve Haerr of South Lake Tahoe told *Lake Tahoe News*.

He and family members watched as ski patrollers helped skiers and snowboarders to the ground. The skiers put a rope across their chest and sat on what looked like a T-bar.

The detachable quad chairlift is 20 to 40 feet off the ground. When it was installed in 1988, Comet was the resort's first high-speed lift.