

Date Submitted: August 04, 2021

Proceeding name: Hemlock Safety and Reliability Investigation

Are you currently registered as an intervener or interested party: Yes, Interested Party

Name: Marie Mackie

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Province: British Columbia

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Comment:

Concerned about the safety and reliability of the electrical utilities at Hemlock Valley

Has Attachment:

True

I have been a cabin owner at Hemlock Valley for 36 years. My three generational family feels so lucky to have this beautiful retreat outside the city. We initially used it mostly in winter on weekends. With the increasing difficulty in travel, that was perpetuated by Covid, we realize that we have a unique gem available to us at Hemlock. Happily, this cabin is now our primary source of recreation and relaxation.

Over the past 5 years, there are been increasing numbers of new family oriented cabin owners, as well as new owners who build huge 2 -4 suite buildings for rental or AirBnB. I am concerned that the original electrical utility (as well as the water and sewer utilities) was not designed to accommodate this current increased demand on the systems. I foresee many more planned and unplanned power outages as our residential community develops at the same time as the proposed activation of the Sasquatch Mountain resort plan. Without clear, reasonable and transparent policies and procedures from the utility, we could be heading into a time of confusion, distrust and frustration for customers and employees.

BC Hydro is the only source of power for Hemlock Valley Electrical Services and “*Hemlock has not communicated future demands to BC Hydro as of yet*”! (Response to Scoping Questions)
I believe the potential for increased demand has been evident for several years.

“Hemlock Utility Services has maintained a relationship with Wind River Power Corporation to keep updated on the progress of “islanding” the run-of-river project on Sakwi Creek. Wind River Power Corporation would then supply BC Hydro with power that would effectively act as a backup supply source for Hemlock Valley and the Sts’ailes First Nations community.” (G-153-21)
This project has been completed for several years. Has there been any followup?

HUSL has identified aging infrastructure and availability of specialized parts as being the challenge for them and they are just now creating an inventory and maintenance plan with a tracking system. Had a preventative maintenance been in place years ago, increased demand and issues such as outdated vault electrical elbows may have been predicted earlier. The utility identifies various procedures being developed but they are all still “early stages of development”, “working towards”, “working on”, no specific outline”, “yet to be determined”. Their plan to minimize unplanned outages with fault detection in critical junction vaults has “no specific outline yet”! Yes, I am concerned about the reliability of the system, given that it seems that we appear to be working day to day, with no plan in place.

My knowledge of electricity does not give me the ability to comment on the technical safety issues within the system. But can I be assured that the electrical work is being done by the appropriately trained personnel? Do we have a qualified FSR 'A' on staff to deal with High Voltage equipment or does one need to be booked from Platinum Electric each time? With the increased service demands (new builds), are the contracted trades provided adequate details to locate the services and complete the work effectively?

I do find it disturbing that there is no disaster management plan for the electrical operations. I appreciate backup generators for the sewer and water systems and the lodge but I have heard of no consultation from the Hemlock utility about the electrical plan.

In summary, I am concerned about the safety and reliability of Hemlock Utility Services. Until there is active communication with BC Hydro about the increasing demand and until the utility has accurate knowledge of the system they do have and what they need, I see continued uncertainty for the path forward.