Successful launch for New Zealand's first 8-seater chairlift

LEITNER completes prestigious project at Mount Hutt on the South Island

Just 90 minutes from Christchurch, the slopes of Mount Hutt are among New Zealand's most popular skiing areas. By building the country's first 8-seater chairlift, LEITNER has provided a further boost to the resort's quality, meaning shorter waiting times and maximum operational safety. The chairlift has also been specially prepared for the weather conditions particular to the South Island's top winter sports region.

Being so near to Christchurch, the largest city on the South Island, and enjoying New Zealand's longest skiing season, the Mount Hutt ski area is a big favourite with the public. With 40 kilometres of slopes, the resort has been voted the nation's most popular ski area six times in a row (2015 to 2020). Up until now, two surface lifts and three chairlifts have transported skiers to the area's highest point at 2,190 metres. LEITNER's new "Nor'west Express" – the first 8-seater chairlift in the country – makes the journey not only more comfortable, but also significantly faster. Travelling the route of the old lift, the new system takes around 3,000 people per hour directly to the start of popular intermediate trails and terrain parks in just two minutes instead of the previous seven.

Noticeably better quality in any weather

As well as doubling transport capacity, the 686-meter-long "Nor'west Express" features an especially stable design. Powered by a DirectDrive system, it was specially designed for the weather conditions on Mount Hutt, which are often extreme. Premium chairs with vertical oscillation dampers, and the application of a de-icing liquid made of glycol to the cable as it passes through the station, ensure maximum operational resilience on windy and very cold days.

Operator NZ Ski has also invested in greater comfort and a secure ride experience by having it equipped with individual footrests. The overall result is that during the first month of operation, the system met and exceeded all of its objectives: reduced waiting times for guests, fewer delays and stops at stations and maximum wind stability. Ski resort manager James McKenzie is delighted with how the system has turned out. "Our experience with LEITNER has been absolutely fantastic! Despite the impact the pandemic could have had on production, what with border closures, freight delays and such like, the project was delivered on time and within budget. Every effort was made to optimize the design to suit our needs, minimize freight costs and ensure that the equipment was delivered on time. Because of their standards of safety and workmanship, working with the LEITNER installation teams from Europe and New Zealand has become the benchmark for future ropeway projects."

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