



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Jewel Cave
National Monument

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Jewel Cave National Monument News Release

Release Date: **October 19, 2012**

For Immediate Release

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Jewel Cave Suspends Tours

Custer – Jewel Cave National Monument has suspended cave tours for an indefinite period of time, due to elevator problems. Two 28-story elevators serve as the primary transportation mode into the cave, and all staff and visitors access the cave using this system. The elevators have been off-line since Friday afternoon, October 12, and repair efforts to date have not yet fixed the problems. Repair efforts are continuing, but there is no definite date when the elevators will be operational.

Working in collaboration with elevator service technicians and Black Hills Electric Cooperative, park staff are searching for possible causes that create the off-line situations. Wind Cave National Park has also assisted with the effort through staff support and electrical system testing. Superintendent Larry Johnson states, “We have experienced sporadic elevator shutdowns for the past several months. We believed the problems were being repaired after each shutdown, but additional problems keep showing up. The situations have not only caused visitor and employee frustration, but our level of visitor services is being compromised. We are trying our best to narrow down the possibilities, and we believe we are making progress. However, we still have some causes to rule out.”

Black Hills Electric Cooperative installed data recorders on incoming power lines to the visitor center, as well as the elevator equipment. The tests monitored voltage surges and power fluctuations that may cause issues for sensitive electrical panels. At present, the data recorders have not shown any significant areas of concern. For this reason, elevator technicians continue to search for other possible internal system errors.

A direct lightning strike at the Monument in July damaged the elevators and other electrical systems, including power lines and internal phones. Repairs were made, but it appears the strike may have caused additional elevator damage that has not yet been identified. Johnson further comments, “As much as we dislike suspending cave tours, we cannot operate until we are assured the problems have been identified and fixed. The elevators need to be repaired, so they perform safely and reliably. Most importantly we will not compromise visitor and employee safety.”

The Visitor Center will continue to be open daily from 8:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. Park Rangers will also be available to answer questions and provide service for those that wish to visit the facility during the cave closure.

To learn more about the Monument, call the Visitor Center at 605-673-8300 and select Option 2. Monument information can also be accessed online at www.nps.gov/jeca.

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