

Snapshots from the Sea-to-Sky . . .

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Scalers clear the way for safer slopes

Crews of rock scalers suspended from bluffs high above the highway or rappelling downslope above the rail line are at work in a process known as slope stabilization. They are clearing the rugged hillsides for construction work below that includes building retaining walls or simply ensuring no loose material will fall on the highway or CN Rail line. This procedure is essential during construction, but is also part of on-going maintenance when construction is complete. Manually, or with hydraulic equipment, or even explosives, they clear loose rocks, trees and other debris. The devices they use include rock bolts, wire mesh, high-pressure spray-on shotcrete or rock impact barriers in some locations. Although rock scaling happens at several locations along the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project, the majority of the work is concentrated in 20-km section between Brunswick Beach and Minaty Bay.

P.S. *Modern construction rock scaling traces its beginnings to the construction of the Hoover Dam during the 1930's where men called 'high scalers' climbed down the canyon walls on ropes, using dynamite and jack hammers to remove loose rock.*



Scalers are tethered by 1 ¼" steel-core hemp ropes, always anchored at two locations. Typically, there is one person on the ground, one up top and from two to six scalers on the rock face. All safety equipment is rated to handle 5000 lb. capacity, and scalers stop to do safety checks of gear and equipment every 30 minutes.

The Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project *Improving safety, reliability and capacity*

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