

Alton Towers Smiler ride crash due to 'human error'

24 November 2015

Human error caused the Alton Towers rollercoaster crash in June that seriously injured five people, the Staffordshire theme park has said.

Two women – Victoria Balch and Leah Washington – had legs amputated after the Smiler ride hit an empty carriage on 2 June.

Staff misunderstood a shutdown message and wrongly restarted the ride, an investigation by the park confirmed.

No technical or mechanical issues were found with the ride itself.

The ride, which has been closed since the crash, will reopen next year with improved safety measures.

"A ride shutdown message was misunderstood by staff at the ride," an Alton Towers spokeswoman said.

"This led to a decision to manually restart the ride, overriding the control system without appropriate safety protocols being followed correctly."

A total of 16 people were injured when the carriage they were in collided with an empty one that had come to a halt ahead of them.

Merlin Entertainment, which owns Alton Towers, previously said all 16 would receive compensation.

Crash errors

Four people sitting in the front row were among those most seriously hurt.

Ms Balch, 20, from Lancashire, had six rounds of surgery in a bid to save her leg before needing an amputation.

Ms Washington, 17, from Barnsley, also had one of her legs amputated and her 18-year-old boyfriend Joe Pugh shattered his knees.

Daniel Thorpe, 27, from Buxton in Derbyshire, was treated for a collapsed lung and lower leg injuries.

Another passenger Chanda Chauhan, 49, from Wednesbury, had surgery after suffering internal injuries.

The Health and Safety Executive said its own investigation was “still ongoing”.

Alton Towers said it had followed “standard HR procedures and taken the appropriate action” when dealing with the staff whose errors caused the crash.

A spokeswoman said: “The outcome of this however remains a private matter between us and any individual concerned.”

Merlin Entertainments said significantly lower numbers of visitors to Alton Towers over the summer had prompted a restructuring of the business which could see 190 job losses following an 11.4% fall in revenues.

When the Smiler reopens next year, it will feature an additional level of authorisation so no manual override can happen without a senior member of staff, the theme park said.

“We are confident that lessons have been learned and that appropriate action has been taken to address all the issues raised by our investigation.”

Source

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-34911943> [Accessed on 29 November 2015]

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Reading

1. List three facts that you learn from this article.

2. What is the meaning of 'protocols' as used in the text?

- a. directions ☐
- b. instructions ☐
- c. guidelines ☐
- d. procedures ☐

3. Is the following statement true or false?

	True	False
Two females had to have their legs amputated due to the accident on the 'Smiler' ride.		

This is a deduction question. You need to read the text carefully and show that you understand it.

4. In your own words, summarise the impact of the accident on the theme park.

*This is a summarising question. You must select information from the text and convey it in your own words. **Do not** just copy from the text.*

5. What is the purpose of this text?

- a. personal ☐
- b. occupational ☐
- c. educational ☐
- d. public ☐

This question tests your ability to use deduction skills to identify the intended audience of a text.

Writing

6. Design a leaflet for a theme park for teenagers. You should try to persuade them to come to your theme park. Aim to write 300-400 words.
7. "I will never go back to Alton Towers after what happened on the Smiler. It is just not safe!" What do you think of this statement? Do you agree? Write 200-300 words.

Remember to give your opinion and to give reasons for your opinions.

Oracy

8. In small groups discuss your ideas and opinions about whether theme parks are good tourist attractions.

Remember to listen as well as talk. Make sure that every member of the group gets a chance to share their opinion.

9. You need to present your leaflet (see question 6) to the class, explaining what your theme park is about and persuading everyone to come to it. You must explain why your theme park is the best. You should aim to speak for 3-4 minutes.

You are encouraged to interest your fellow pupils by giving interesting facts about your subject and making interesting language choices. Use good presentation skills: clear voice, pleasant manner, smile, look at your audience rather than reading from notes.