

Snapshots from the Sea-to-Sky . . .

March 26, 2007 • Number 12

Drillers prepare for blasting

They are the rock drillers. They drive and operate tractor-mounted rock drilling machines, drilling explosive-charge holes through the rock surface to prepare for blasting. One of the larger rock cuts on the Sea-to-Sky Highway Improvement Project is located around Darrell Bay, across from Shannon Falls. Nearly 80,000 cubic metres of rock is being removed and crushed by portable rock crusher at the site. That's the equivalent of over 500 railway boxcars. Some crushed rock is being used for a mechanically stabilized earth wall on the other side of the highway, and some hauled about 1 km to be used as fill. The drillers set the drill bits and monitor the depth of the hole to specifications set by the blasters. The Darrell Bay cut is being worked by three drills on two ten hour shifts. The target is to remove 5000 cubic metres each week, or about 33 boxcars.

P.S. Early rock drilling was done by hand. Either one person would hold a drill rod in place while swinging a four-pound hammer, or a two-person team would have one swinging a nine-pound hammer as the other gave the drill rod a twist between strikes. The hole might be an inch deeper after a 12-hour shift.



The Darrell Bay cut is complicated by the adjacent highway traffic, the CN Rail line, hydro transmission towers and a 40-metre high steep bluff. The deepest drillers can go here is 10 metres, with average blasts yielding about 1200 cubic metres each.

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

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