

# Washington Monument's elevator damaged in earthquake

By Michael E. Ruane, Pub: September 26, 2011 Washington Post

The Washington Monument's elevator system was damaged by last month's earthquake and has to be repaired, the National Park Service said Monday.

The elevator is operating only to the 250-foot level of the 555-foot monument, the Park Service said, adding that the mechanism is believed to have been damaged by its counterweights during the quake.

In addition, the park has brought in a mountaineering and rope-rigging ranger, Brandon Latham, from Denali National Park in Alaska, to assist engineers in rappelling down the sides of the monument to conduct closer inspections.

Rappelling inspections were to be conducted this week.

The monument has been closed since the 5.8 magnitude earthquake Aug. 23.

After the earthquakes, cracks were found in four exterior stones, the Park Service has said. Some other quake damage was linked to the soft mortar inserted between monument stones during a renovation that began in 1999.

That mortar was designed to crumble, to give the structure some flexibility, the Park Service has said.

The initial cracks were filled, the Park Service said, but when Hurricane Irene came through the area four days after the earthquake, rain puddles were found inside the monument. Experts wondered if there were more, undetected cracks.

The puddles were discovered in stairwells above the 400-foot level of the 555-foot obelisk.

Meanwhile, Washington National Cathedral is resuming work with a new construction crane on earthquake damage to its central tower, spokesman Richard Weinberg said Monday. The massive cathedral in Northwest Washington also has been closed since the earthquake.

A crane brought in for earthquake-related repairs toppled over Sept. 7, injuring its operator and damaging buildings days before the cathedral was set to reopen.

The cathedral was not damaged in the incident, but the building has not been able to reopen, Weinberg said. Two cranes were brought in to help remove the toppled one, and one crane stayed to resume the repairs, he said.