

For information

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL
PANELS ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AND TRANSPORT

Tightening of Noise Emission Standards for Motor Vehicles

Introduction

At the meeting of the Joint Panels on Environmental Affairs and Transport on 29 October 2001, Members requested the Administration to follow up the following matters –

- (a) further discuss with the trades to check if they require additional arrangements for vehicles imported to Hong Kong but remained unsold by the time of the introduction of the new noise emission standards; and
- (b) provide supplementary information on the materials used for paving roads in Hong Kong.

This paper reports the outcome on (a) and provides the information on (b) above.

Background

2. The current noise emission standards for motor vehicles were introduced in 1996 through the Noise Control (Motor Vehicles) Regulation (“the Regulation”). The Regulation requires all motor vehicles, upon first registration in Hong Kong, to meet the European or Japanese noise standards stipulated in its Schedule.

3. In recent years, vehicle noise standards have been progressively tightened in both Europe and Japan. To keep vehicle noise standards in Hong Kong in line with the latest standards recognized internationally, it is proposed that the Schedule to the Regulation be amended to incorporate the latest noise standards adopted in Europe and Japan, from where most of our vehicles are imported.

Further consultation with the trades

4. In early 2001, we conducted our first round of consultation with the trades concerned, including major transport operators, the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association and local motors associations which represent dealers of both new and used motor vehicles. They were generally supportive of the proposal. Most of them did not envisage any difficulty in complying with the new noise standards upon their introduction. However, some of them requested that grace periods be given to certain categories of motor vehicles. Details of their requests are as follows-

- (a) Request of franchised bus companies: a one-year grace period from the introduction of the new noise standards should be given to allow manufacturers of double-deck buses specially designed for the Hong Kong market time to gear up for the production of compliant models.
- (b) Request of other members of the trades: As certain categories of goods vehicles manufactured in Japan do not have to comply as yet with the new noise standards we are proposing to adopt in Hong Kong, they should be exempt from compliance until such

time when the standards concerned become applicable to them in Japan between September 2002 and 2003. A one-year grace period should also be granted to single-deck buses specially designed for the Hong Kong market so as to allow their manufacturers time to gear up for the production of compliant models.

5. The Environmental Protection Department has decided to accede to these requests which are made on practical grounds and will grant the respective grace periods as appropriate. Details of the arrangements are set out in the Annex. The Department has conveyed its decision to the trades concerned.

6. At the meeting of the Joint Panels on 29 October 2001, some Members expressed concern over whether some members of the trades might have difficulty in clearing their stocks which were imported to Hong Kong but remained unsold by the time of the introduction of the new noise standards. To address Members' concern, we conducted a further round of consultation in end 2001 with the trades concerned. All of them reaffirmed that they did not require any transitional arrangements for clearing their existing stocks or that they were content with the grace periods the Environmental Protection Department has already agreed to grant in the earlier round of consultation.

7. The only additional request made by them was to exempt two additional models of motor vehicles which are currently in stock. These two models are tractors and single deck buses with no more than 20 in total number. We consider the request acceptable and will exempt them from the new noise standards.

8. To allow sufficient time for the trades to make necessary arrangements in complying with the new noise standards, our proposed commencement date of the new standards is 1 June 2002. We intend to introduce the proposed amendment regulation to the Legislative Council in April 2002.

Road surfacing materials used in Hong Kong

9. In choosing the appropriate material for paving roads, consideration is given to factors such as cost and ease of maintenance, smoothness of the road surface, and the frequency of trench openings. Most roads are paved with bituminous materials because they can provide a smoother surface relatively easier and more suitable for roads with frequent trench openings. But for roads which are heavily used by stop and go traffic, concrete will be used as it is more durable than bituminous materials. According to records of the Highways Department, 1420 km out of the 1909 km of roads in the territory are paved with bituminous materials and the rest 489 km are paved with concrete. Details are as follows -

	Bituminous		Concrete	
	<u>Length (km)</u>	<u>Area (Mm²)</u>	<u>Length (km)</u>	<u>Area (Mm²)</u>
HK Island	292	2.35	138	1.26
Kowloon	225	2.59	220	2.89
New Territories	903	10.18	131	1.37
Total:	1 420	15.22	489	5.52

GRACE PERIODS FOR MOTOR VEHICLES

EXPIRY DATE OF GRACE PERIOD	TYPE OF MOTOR VEHICLES			NUMBER OF MODEL SERIES CONCERNED	ORIGIN
	Type	Gross Vehicle Mass (Ton)	Net Engine Power (kW)		
1 September 2002	Single Deck Buses	> 1.7 and ≤ 3.5	N.A.	1	Japan
	Goods Vehicles	> 3.5	≤ 150	20	
		> 1.7 and ≤ 3.5	N.A.	2	
One Year from Date of Gazette of Amendment Regulation	Double Deck Buses	N.A.	N.A.	5	Europe
	Single Deck Buses	> 3.5	N.A.	9	Japan
1 September 2003	Goods Vehicles	> 3.5	> 150	58	