

ETWB(T) 3/7/20 pt 7

Tel No. : 2189 2182

Fax No. : 2104 7274

22 February 2005

Mr Andy Lau
 Clerk to Transport Panel
 Legislative Council Secretariat
 3/F, Citibank Tower
 3 Garden Road
 Hong Kong
 Fax: 2121 0420

Dear Mr Lau,

**Proposed Introduction of the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme
 to Private Cars and Light Goods Vehicles (LGVs)**

At the meeting of the Panel on Transport on 17 December 2004, when the captioned item was discussed, Members asked for some additional information. They are set out below.

Accident Involvement Rate of Private Cars and LGVs In terms of Vehicles

2. Between 1999 and 2003, the average accident involvement rate for LGVs is 42.5 per 1,000 vehicles, and that for private cars is 21.6. Details are as follows:

Accident Involvement Rates of LGVs

Year	Number of licenced vehicles	Number of vehicles involved in accidents	Accident involvement rates per 1000 licenced vehicles
1999	74,602	3,114	41.7
2000	73,285	3,232	44.1
2001	71,645	3,041	42.4
2002	70,053	3,117	44.5
2003	68,275	2,728	40.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>71,572</i>	<i>3,046</i>	<i>42.5</i>

Accident Involvement Rates of private cars

Year	Number of licenced vehicles	Number of vehicles involved in accidents	Accident involvement rate per 1000 licenced vehicles
1999	317,616	7,227	22.8
2000	327,581	7,461	22.8
2001	337,279	7,433	22.0
2002	340,801	7,508	22.0
2003	338,534	6,282	18.6
<i>Average</i>	<i>332,362</i>	<i>7,182</i>	<i>21.6</i>

Breakdown of the Accident Involvement Rate of LGVs by Driving Experience

3. The accident involvement rates of LGV drivers expressed in terms of their driving experience are set out below.

Year	Driving Experience						All drivers
	< 1 year	> 1 year	1 – 10 years	10 – 20 years	20 – 30 years	> 30 years	
1999	6.07	2.78	5.45	2.39	1.48	0.65	3.09
2000	4.79	2.72	5.10	2.40	1.45	0.77	2.96
2001	4.81	2.41	4.42	2.23	1.21	0.77	2.63
2002	4.72	2.42	4.24	2.38	1.38	0.66	2.60
2003	3.55	2.06	3.55	2.14	1.20	0.64	2.21
<i>Average</i>	<i>4.79</i>	<i>2.48</i>	<i>4.55</i>	<i>2.31</i>	<i>1.34</i>	<i>0.70</i>	<i>2.70</i>

4. It can be seen that the accident involvement rate of novice LGV drivers with less than one year's experience is the highest, at 4.79 per 1 000 drivers. Those with one to 10 years' driving experience have a slightly lower accident involvement rate of 4.55. The other groups with driving experience of over 10 years have substantially lower accident involvement rates, ranging from 0.7 to 2.31.

5. Our experience with the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme for Motorcyclists shows that such a scheme would have lasting benefits on the driving skill and behaviour of novice drivers and will reduce the accident involvement rate in their second and third year of driving. For instance, the accident involvement rate of second-year motorcyclists was 27.07 per 1 000 motorcyclists in 2002, compared to 44.88 in 1999, 48.24 in 2000 and 54.75 in 2001 before the scheme was implemented. Similarly, in 2003, the accident involvement rate of third-year motorcyclists was 16.21, which compared favourably to 34.01 in 2000, 49.88 in 2001 and 37.26 in 2002.

6. We are therefore of the view that the proposed Probationary Driving Licence Scheme for private cars and LGVs would reduce not only the accident involvement rate of first-year drivers, but over time, the accident involvement rates of second-year and third-year drivers as well. As a result, the overall accident involvement rate of all private cars and LGVs would decrease.

Breakdown of the Accident Involvement Rate of LGVs By Vehicle Weight

7. The accident involvement rates of LGVs broken down by their vehicle weight are as follows:

	Below 3.5 tonnes	3.5 to 5.5 tonnes	No weight record
2000	12.5	13.1	18.5
2001	13.8	13.7	14.9
2002	16.7	16.4	11.4
2003	16.7	16.0	7.3
<i>Average</i>	<i>14.9</i>	<i>14.8</i>	<i>13.0</i>

8. The figures show that there is no discernible difference between the accident involvement rates of LGVs below 3.5 tonnes and those between 3.5 and 5.5 tonnes. There is thus no evidence to show that larger and heavier LGVs are more likely to have accidents.

Overseas Practices Regarding Restrictions Imposed on New Drivers

9. Information on overseas practices is set out at the Annex. It can be seen that many places do apply some restrictions to novice drivers. In fact, many of the requirements are similar to or more stringent than those that we are now proposing. For instance, many places require the display of “P” plate, and the duration of probation are mostly more than 12 months. Many places do set a ceiling on the demerit points accumulated as well as restrictions on night-time driving.

Accident Involvement Rates of Novice Private Car and LGV Drivers

10. At the December meeting, some Members asked about the higher accident involvement rate of novice private car drivers vis-à-vis LGVs. As pointed out by some other Members during the same meeting, this is likely to have arisen from the much larger base of LGV drivers.

11. Under the current licensing regime, applicants for LGV driving licences would be issued both private car and LGV licences after they have passed the LGV driving test; while applicants for private car driving licences would be issued private car driving licences only. We understand that many applicants sit for the LGV driving test with a view to securing both private car and LGV licences. While such would provide them more flexibility, in practice, they would only drive private cars. This can be illustrated by the fact that there are currently about 1,710,000 private car driving licences and 340,000 licensed private cars, whereas for LGVs, there are about 1,270,000 LGV driving licences and 68,000 licensed LGVs. There is no way for us to ascertain which of the licence holders are actually private car or LGV drivers. As a result, it is highly possible that the total number of LGV drivers would have included those LGV licence holders who in fact only drive private cars. The much larger denominator would result in a lower accident involvement rate for LGV drivers.

Impact of Scheme on the Employment of novice LGV drivers

12. Some Members are concerned that the proposed scheme might affect existing novice LGV drivers. We wish to assure Members that this will not be the case, as the scheme will only affect those who apply to sit for the driving examination after the scheme has been implemented.

13. As regards the reduction of new entrants to the LGV trade in the future, we do not think this should be a major concern. Taking motorcyclists as an example, after the introduction of the probationary driving licence scheme, there has been continued increase in the number of new licences issued (6,082 in 2001, 6,151 in 2002, 7,398 in 2003 and 11,285 in 2004). In fact, the number of new licences issued in 2004 was 74% higher than that issued in 1999, before the introduction of the scheme. In addition, the number of novice LGV drivers constitutes only about 3% of the total number of LGV drivers. We therefore do not consider that the proposed scheme would deter novice LGV drivers from entering the trade.

Exemption for Novice LGV Drivers who already have driving experience

14. Some Members suggested that it should not be necessary to apply the scheme to holders of licences of other vehicle types. We agree with this suggestion and propose that the following be exempted from the scheme:

- (a) holders of a valid full private car driving licence for at least 3 years before the date of application for full LGV driving licence, and has passed the LGV driving test; and
- (b) holders of a valid full driving licence for medium goods vehicles or heavy goods vehicles.

15. I should be most grateful if you would pass on the above information to Members of the Transport Panel.

Yours sincerely,

(Ms Annie Choi)
for Secretary for Environment,
Transport and Works

Overseas practice regarding restrictions on new drivers

Overseas	Vehicle classes with restrictions on new drivers	Probationary period	Restrictions
Australia (Victoria)	Low powered vehicles (no clear definition on vehicle classification by weight)	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display “P” plate • Zero tolerance of alcohol concentration in drivers’ blood
Australia (New South Wales)	Vehicles of weight below 4.5 tonnes (e.g. private cars, light trucks and motor cycles)	Progressive learning in two stages: P1: 12 months P2: 24 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display “P” plate • Alcohol concentration in drivers’ blood should not exceed specified limit • Maximum speed limit of 90 km/hr • Cannot accumulate more than 3 demerit points All above restrictions, except: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum speed limit of 100 km/hour • Cannot accumulate more than 6 demerit points
Singapore	Vehicles of unladen weight with less 3 tonnes	1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display “P” plate • Cannot accumulate more than 12 demerit points
United Kingdom	Vehicles of weight below 3.5 tonnes (e.g. private cars, vans and motor cycles)	2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot accumulate more than 6 demerit points
USA (Michigan)	Private cars, light trucks and vans (no clear definition on vehicle classification by weight)	3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last 10 months of the probation period must be without any “at-fault” crash

Overseas	Vehicle classes with restrictions on new drivers	Probationary period	Restrictions
USA (Wisconsin)	Private cars, light trucks and motor cycles (no clear definition on vehicle classification by weight)	2-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero tolerance of alcohol concentration in drivers' blood • Demerit points doubled for every traffic offences after first conviction • Cannot drive between midnight and 5 a.m. • Must be accompanied by a licenced supervisor when driving
Canada (British Columbia)	Vehicles of weight below 4.6 tonnes (e.g. private cars, vans and trucks)	2 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display "N" plate • Zero tolerance of alcohol concentration in drivers' blood • Must be accompanied by a licenced supervisor when driving • Night time driving restriction
New Zealand	Vehicles of weight below 4.5 tonnes (e.g. private cars and vans)	0.5 to 1.5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannot drive alone between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. • Must not carry passengers unless accompanied with a supervisor • For drivers under 20 years of age, the limit of alcohol concentration in drivers' blood should not exceed 30 mg per 100 ml of blood. • For drivers over 20 years of age, the limit of alcohol concentration in drivers' blood should not exceed 80 mg per 100 ml of blood.