

For discussion
24 October 2006

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Measures to Enhance Safety of Reversing Goods Vehicles

Purpose

This paper sets out the measures to enhance the safety of reversing goods vehicles.

Accidents Involving Reversing Goods Vehicles

2. In the past two months, there were four fatal accidents involving reversing goods vehicles. They have led to concerns about the safety of goods vehicles when reversing. The number of traffic accidents involving reversing goods vehicles is in **Annex A**. In the past five years, the average number of traffic accidents involving reversing goods vehicles was 187 per year, accounting for about 1.24% of the total number of all accidents. There is no obvious upward or downward trend on the total number of such accidents. We are committed to enhancing road safety from all fronts. To further enhance the safety of reversing goods vehicles, a range of measures are being taken.

Measures to Enhance Safety of Reversing Goods Vehicles

Publicity and Education

3. The greatest potential for enhancing road safety lies in improving the behaviour of both drivers and pedestrians. We are stepping up our publicity and education efforts as follows –

- (a) We have recently produced a new radio Announcement of Public Interest, which is being broadcast frequently, to remind goods vehicle

drivers of the need for safe reversing.

- (b) Stickers with safe reversing messages will be placed on all goods vehicle parking meters and some private car parking meters in busy areas by late October.
- (c) Leaflets are being produced to urge drivers, vehicle owners, shop/factory owners and pedestrians to take appropriate actions to enhance safety where there are reversing vehicles. The leaflets will be distributed through Transport Department (TD)'s licensing offices, district offices and carparks, as well as during our on-street education and publicity campaigns.
- (d) The Police and TD will convey safety messages to the goods vehicle trades through regular conferences and seminars.
- (e) TD have delivered talks to registered safety officers, who would prepare guidelines to remind their commercial vehicle drivers of the need for safe reversing.
- (f) Since the high-risk groups in traffic accidents are senior citizens and children, we will put special emphasis on promoting their awareness of pedestrian safety by organising talks at elderly centres, kindergarten and schools etc.
- (g) The Road Safety Council will launch the "Smart Driving with Courtesy" campaign later this year. Messages on courtesy to pedestrians, especially the elderly, will be included.

Training courses for goods vehicle drivers

4. We have been organizing specific training courses and safety workshops for drivers of public service vehicles, including public light buses, taxis and non-franchised buses, and some 1 500 commercial drivers have attended these courses. Certificates are issued to those who have completed the courses to encourage voluntary participation. We have extended this effort to goods vehicle drivers. At present, goods vehicle drivers may attend "Road Safety and Driving Improvement Course" under the Skills Upgrading Scheme.

Other more specific training courses for drivers of goods vehicles will be launched in November 2006.

5. There are suggestions that all goods vehicle drivers should be required to attend driving improvement courses regularly. In this connection, it must be noted that there are currently over 1 600 000 goods vehicles driving licence holders and 400,000 professional goods vehicle drivers in Hong Kong. Most goods vehicle drivers have good driving practice and are law-abiding citizens. Hence, it may not be appropriate or practicable to mandate all these drivers to attend driving improvement courses.

6. Separately, we are working on a proposal to make it a mandatory requirement for repeat traffic offenders to attend driving improvement courses. We expect the proposal to be ready for consultation by the end of this year. In the meantime, we will continue to encourage goods vehicle drivers to attend the relevant training courses on a voluntary basis.

Review of Road Environment

7. There are some narrow cul-de-sacs in the older built-up areas, where turning of vehicles may be difficult or impossible and vehicles have to reverse for access inevitably. There are suggestions that vehicles should be banned from entering these cul-de-sacs. We have reservations on imposing a general ban on all such roads. We consider it important to balance the need for access of the local residents/businesses and consider whether such banning will lead to problems on other roads in the vicinity. In fact, reversing of vehicles does not happen only at cul-de-sacs. It may happen at other locations e.g. when vehicles need to park on the roadside. Also, reversing of vehicles can actually be carried out without compromising road safety if all road users exercise due care.

8. TD will continue to review and monitor the road safety situation in these areas, taking into account the practical needs of local residents and commercial activities, the knock-on impact on nearby roads, as well as the views of the local community etc. Depending on the situation of individual roads, additional measures like installation of signs to warn drivers and pedestrians of possible reversing vehicles, restrictions on the time or location of loading/unloading activities or restrictions on access by certain types of vehicles may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Workman to Assist Drivers When Reversing

9. There are also suggestions that we should make it a legislative requirement that all goods vehicles should have a workman to assist the driver, particularly when the driver reverses the vehicle. We have reservations on such a proposal as there will inevitably be substantial cost implications to the logistics and goods vehicle industry. We would nevertheless continue to explore with the trade the feasibility of the proposal. We will also urge drivers to seek assistance from workers of the shop/factory to which their goods are delivered.

Additional Devices to Assist Reversing of Goods Vehicles

10. With effect from 1 April 2000, we have made it mandatory for all goods vehicles to be fitted with an automatic device capable of giving an audible warning to nearby pedestrians when it reverses¹.

11. While the aforesaid audible device aims to warn pedestrians of a reversing vehicle, there are also devices to assist drivers to reverse more safely. They include rear view mirrors, reversing sensors and rear video (or CCTV) system. A summary of these devices is at **Annex B**.

12. Installation of rear view mirrors, reversing sensors or video system are permitted under the current legislation. With these additional devices, the drivers' view of the area around the rear of their vehicle may be improved, especially for goods vehicles with goods compartments that obstruct the rear view. However, not all these devices are suitable for all types of goods vehicles. The effectiveness and reliability of the devices depend on the vehicle type, vehicle body form and proper maintenance. Also, we understand that most overseas countries do not mandate the fitting of these devices on vehicles².

¹ Failure to comply with this requirement under the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap. 374A) is liable to a maximum fine of \$10 000 and 6 months' imprisonment.

² The European Union has made specifications for installing rear video system but it would only conduct a review in 2010 to ascertain whether the device has a positive effect on road safety. On the other hand, although the US Federal Government has carried out a public consultation exercise on the mandatory installation of these devices onto goods vehicles, no decision has yet been made.

As such, we will have to examine in further detail, in consultation with the trade, whether and how we can mandate the fitting of such devices on all goods vehicles.

13. Nonetheless, as a first step, we will compile design and installation guidelines for goods vehicle owners and encourage them to retrofit their vehicles with such devices. In parallel, we will explore with vehicle manufacturers the suitability of different devices for different vehicles and the feasibility of installing them as built-in items. We will also continue to keep in view the latest developments in overseas countries.

Advice Sought

14. Members are invited to note the proposals in the paper.

Environment, Transport and Works Bureau
October 2006

Traffic accidents involving reversing goods vehicles

Year	Number of traffic accidents involving reversing vehicles (all vehicle types)	Number of traffic accidents involving reversing goods vehicles
1999	513	213
2000	510	203
2001	480	200
2002	465	181
2003	476	182
2004	453	179
2005	500	195
2006 *	343	126

* Up to September

Possible devices on vehicles to assist drivers reversing their vehicles

Device	Description	Pros	Cons	Approx costs
Rear view mirrors	An additional convex mirror installed at rear end of the vehicle giving the view behind the vehicle that is normally not visible to the driver. The image is reflected to the driver through the normal external rear view mirror next to the drivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap • Easy to install • Reasonably robust and reliable • Durable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effective range between the normal rear view mirrors and the additional mirror is limited to about 5 metres, which is not suitable for most goods vehicles. • Night vision is limited unless there is external light source. 	\$500 (for a 25 to 30 cm diameter mirror excluding labour)
Reversing sensor	The sensors rely on sonar or infrared technologies to detect the presence of an object in the vicinity of the sensors. A visual and/or audible alarm will then be sent to the driver in the driving compartment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheap • Easy to install 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It can only detect objects within a limited horizontal / vertical detection range. • It is not suitable for use on goods vehicles with highly-mounted vehicle body because there can be many blind spots. • It can be easily damaged. • 	\$300 to \$1 000
Rear video system (or CCTV)	It consists of a camera installed at the rear end of a vehicle to capture the rear view image. A monitor screen is installed near the driver's seat to display the image. If the system operates on infrared, it can display rear view images under dark conditions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real image display • Wider range of detection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive • Frequent maintenance and cleaning to ensure proper functioning • Less durable. 	\$3 000 to \$9 000