

政府總部
運輸及房屋局
運輸科
香港花園道美利大廈



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30 April 2009

Clerk to Panel on Transport
Legislative Council
Legislative Council Building
8 Jackson Road
Central
Hong Kong
(Attn. : Ms Sarah Yuen)

Dear Ms Yuen,

Panel on Transport
23 January 2009

At the Panel on Transport meeting held on 23 January 2009, Members discussed the “Recent bus fire/smoke incidents” and requested the Government to provide supplementary information on the causes of the incidents and preventive measures. Please find enclosed the information requested for Members’ reference.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Constance Choy'.

(Miss Constance Choy)
for Secretary for Transport and Housing

c.c. Commissioner for Transport (Attn.: Mr Albert Yuen)

**Follow-up actions arising from
Panel on Transport Meeting on 23 January 2009
Recent bus fire/smoke incidents**

(a) Information on the following issues:

(1) *The Administration's and the bus companies' responses to the views of experts on how to prevent bus fire incidents as reported by Wen Wui Pao dated 8 January 2009 –*

(i) *as the occurrence of bus fire/smoke incidents might be related to bus age, it was necessary to more regularly carry out maintenance on buses over 10 years old, and to remind maintenance staff to pay special attention to components that might pose fire hazards as they aged;*

- The following table shows the total number of buses involved in fire incidents in 2006 to 2008, and the number of these buses which were over 10 years old.

Year	2006	2007	2008
(a) Number of buses involved in bus fire	16	9	19
(b) Number of buses in (a) which were over 10 years old	7	3	10
(c) % of buses involved in bus fire incidents which were over 10 years old [(b)/(a)]	44%	33%	53%

- As shown by the above statistics, there is no correlation between the occurrence of bus fires and the age of the bus concerned.
- Every serving franchised bus is examined by its own company every month, and it has to undergo annual examination by the Transport Department (TD) to ensure its safety and roadworthiness. TD will continue to closely monitor the maintenance of the franchised buses by continuing spot check on the in-service buses and buses which have just passed their monthly inspection. TD also holds regular meetings with the

franchised bus operators to evaluate and review the inspection results and maintenance quality, and will instruct franchised bus operators to carry out investigations and introduce remedial measures where necessary.

- TD has also reminded the maintenance staff of the operators to pay special attention to components that might pose fire hazards.

(ii) *that there was a need to improve the air circulation of bus air-conditioning systems to prevent overheating;*

- TD is now working with the bus operators and bus manufacturers to explore automatic shutdown of the air-conditioning ventilation system to prevent the propagation of fire to the passenger compartment in the event a fire breaks out in the engine compartment, and to improve the air circulation of the air conditioning system to prevent overheating.

(2) *Whether the occurrence of bus fire/smoke incidents was related to bus age;*

- There is no correlation between the occurrence of bus fires and the age of the bus concerned. Please refer to our response to (a)(1)(i) above.

(3) *As bus fire/smoke incidents were mainly related to overheating, whether suitable devices could be introduced to alert bus captains of overheating so that they could take timely actions; and*

- Some of the franchised buses have been installed with temperature sensors in their engine compartments to alert bus captains in case of overheating. In most of the cases, smoke / fire was seen before the sensor was triggered because the origin of fire varied from time to time. TD is exploring with the bus operators and manufacturers on how the present system can be improved.

(4) *How fire-proof were the bus body materials presently used, and what improvements in this regard could be made to existing buses to prevent bus fire incidents.*

- The double deck franchised buses in Hong Kong are supplied by European bus manufacturers, and the body materials are fire retardant. In order to prevent bus fire incidents, TD is working with the franchised bus operators and the manufacturers to enhance the checking and early replacement of parts and components which might pose fire hazards.

(b) A comparison of the daily and monthly numbers of buses covered in spot checks before and after the three incidents, as well as the number of safety problems so identified, and the actions taken to address them.

- The average number of spot checks in the year 2008 was 14 per working day. After the incidents on 10 December 2008, TD strengthened the number of spot checks per working day to 17 buses in January 2009. In the first quarter of 2009, no safety items related to potential fire hazards were found in the spot check.

Transport and Housing Bureau
Transport Department
April 2009