

Submission to the Bills Committee on Motor Vehicle Idling (Fixed Penalty) Bill

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1. We want to express our full support to the Bill.
2. There is very strong local data to show that an increase in the concentration of air pollutants including NO_x, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} results in a proportional increase in asthmatic exacerbations, doctor and emergency room visits, hospitalization, and death from asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The effect is often extended for a few days, and is especially severe in children and senior citizens above 65 years of age.^{1,2,3}
3. Scientific studies have also shown convincingly that chronic exposure to a higher concentration of pollutants like NO_x or PM₁₀ results in poorer growth and development of the lungs of exposed children. This is exemplified by a poorer cardiopulmonary fitness level of children exposed chronically to air pollution.^{4,5}
4. In the recent 10 years, studies from the US, Japan, Germany and many other countries have also shown a direct relationship with roadside air pollution and the incidence of asthma in children, with exposed children having a 30-50% higher chance of developing asthma and allergic sensitization.^{6,7,8}
5. For the year 2009, air pollution in Hong Kong was responsible for 796 asthma admissions, 6.15 million doctor visits, 63,383 hospital bed-days, 830 premature deaths, and a direct medical cost of 1,887 million HK dollars (Hedley Environmental Index).⁹
6. Due to our unique situation of narrow roads, tall buildings, and high usage of diesel vehicles, air by the roadside with heavy traffic is often of the worst quality in the world. This situation is especially severe in a hot summer day.
7. There is an urgent need for the Government to reduce roadside pollution by controlling emissions from vehicles through all possible measures. The Motor Vehicle Idling (Fixed Penalty) Bill is only one of the measures towards controlling or eliminating this important health hazard. Nevertheless it is an important step towards the right direction.
8. We appeal to the Legislative Council to pass the Bill to show its determination and commitment towards improving the health of the people of Hong Kong.

References:

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