

**For discussion on
7 January 2000**

Legislative Council Panel on Environmental Affairs

**Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel)
(Amendment) Regulation 2000**

Reducing the Benzene Content in Unleaded Petrol

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' views on the proposal to reduce the benzene content in unleaded petrol from 5% to not more than 1%.

Background

2. Benzene is a confirmed human carcinogen. It enters the human body primarily through inhalation and can cause toxicological effects such as injury to bone marrow. A number of overseas cases of leukemia have been reported to be associated with long-term exposure to benzene.

3. Petrol is a major source of benzene. To enhance public health protection, the international trend is to reduce the benzene content in petrol.

4. Since 1 April 1999, Hong Kong has banned the supply, sale and distribution of leaded petrol. All petrol must be unleaded. Our current limit for the benzene in unleaded petrol is 5% by volume. The USA has limited the benzene content in unleaded petrol to not more than 1% and the European Union will be introducing the same benzene limit in unleaded petrol with effect from January 2000. Such petrol can now be made commercially available in Hong Kong.

5. The ambient concentration of benzene in Hong Kong is less than 2.6 microgrammes per cubic metre, which is comparable with those of other major cities such as Vancouver, Sydney and London, which range from 1 to 8 microgrammes per cubic metre. But, further reduction in the maximum benzene level in unleaded petrol will give added protection to Hong Kong's population and is a sensible precaution to take given the harmful effects that benzene can

have.

Proposed Amendment

6. The Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation (Cap 311, sub. leg.) sets the limit for benzene in unleaded petrol to not more than 5% by volume. We propose to introduce the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) (Amendment) Regulation at **Annex** to tighten the limit for benzene in unleaded petrol to not more than 1% by volume.

Consultation

7. Consultation was made with the oil industry and they supported the proposal. The Advisory Council on the Environment supported the proposal at their meeting on 20th December 1999. Some members raised questions about possible impact on fuel prices. The oil companies have advised that these are unlikely to be significant. An oil company estimated that the increase in fuel prices could be about 1-2% only.

Public Reaction

8. The public in general is expected to welcome the proposed amendment as it will help reduce the level of benzene in air and so help to safeguard the public against the risk of cancer.

Staff Implication

9. The proposed tightening of the benzene limit will not increase workload. Additional staff are not required.

Implementation

10. Subject to the views of Members and approval by the Legislative Council, the proposed change in benzene limit will commence on 1 April 2000.

Environment and Food Bureau
January 2000

DRAFT
**AIR POLLUTION CONTROL (MOTOR VEHICLE FUEL)
(AMENDMENT) REGULATION 2000**

(Made under section 43 of the Air Pollution Control
Ordinance (Cap. 311) after consultation with
the Advisory Council on the Environment)

1. Commencement

This Regulation shall come into operation on 1 April 2000.

2. Schedule amended

Schedule 2 to the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation (Cap. 311 sub. leg.) is amended by repealing "5.0%" in paragraph (e) and substituting "1.0%".

Secretary for the Environment and Food

[2000]

Explanatory Note

This Regulation amends the Air Pollution Control (Motor Vehicle Fuel) Regulation (Cap. 311 sub. leg.) by reducing the benzene content in unleaded petrol to not more than 1% by volume [to enhance public health protection/in line with international trend].