

**For information
on 16 January 2007**

**Legislative Council
Panel on Environmental Affairs**

**Public Consultation on
Banning Idling Vehicles with Running Engines**

PURPOSE

This note provides further information to address a number of questions raised by Members at the special meeting of the Panel on Environmental Affairs on 8 January 2008 regarding the proposal to ban idling vehicles with running engines.

Enforcement Arrangements of the Ban

2. The educational approach pursued by Government over the past few years has not been entirely successful in changing the driving habit of some motorists who continue to turn on the engines of their vehicles while waiting. The public has also become more intolerant of idling vehicles and demand for more effective measures to tackle the problem beyond the educational approach. It is against this background that we launch the current consultation on the proposed statutory ban against idling vehicles. To provide for a necessary deterrent against non-compliance, under the proposal any driver contravening the ban will be liable to a fixed penalty fine of \$320. Traffic wardens will be responsible for serving the fixed penalty ticket on the spot. Staff of Environmental Protection Department will also be tasked to enforce the ban.

3. Implementation of the ban will require the introduction of new legislation. We will work out a detailed legislative proposal after thorough consideration of the views collected in the consultation. To facilitate its enforcement, detailed guidelines will be drawn up for officers tasked with the enforcement responsibilities to follow.

Frequent Switching on and off the Vehicle Engines

4. Extensive exemptions have already been proposed in the consultation paper to obviate the need for drivers to switch on and off their vehicle engines frequently. The key exemptions include –

- (a) vehicles which stop at the roadside for active boarding or alighting, i.e. exemption will not be given to standing vehicles not conducting boarding or alighting activities;
- (b) the first two taxis at a taxi stand and the first two public light buses (PLB) at a PLB stand;
- (c) taxis, PLBs or buses at their designated stops and stands either on street or at termini, which are in the process of passenger boarding or alighting. The exemption will also be given to taxis and PLBs in a moving queue at their designated stops, stands or termini for their turns to pick up passengers; and
- (d) vehicles remaining motionless because of traffic conditions including traffic congestion, accidents and stopping as directed by traffic signs and marking, traffic lights or police officers.
- (e) security transit vehicles operated by a security company holding a valid Security Company Licence issued by the Security and Guarding Services Industry Authority under the Security and guarding Services Ordinance (Cap. 460) for the provision of armoured transportation services;
- (f) vehicles which are required to run their engines (including on-board auxiliary engines) for some ancillary purpose other than providing air-conditioning for comfort of drivers or passengers. Examples of such vehicles include lorry cranes, aerial platforms, mobile concrete pump, traffic warning signs and refrigerator trucks. However, exemption will not be given to vehicles running their on-board auxiliary engines for providing air conditioning for comfort of drivers or passengers;

- (g) vehicles of disciplinary forces and other emergency vehicles (such as those of the Civil Aid Service, Auxiliary Medical Service and the St. John's Ambulance) while engaged in operational activities, including training activities; and
- (h) vehicles engaged in a parade or any other event authorized by the Transport Department.

5. Based on our research, the effects of switching on and off a vehicle engine have not been studied extensively both internationally and locally. The Office of Energy Efficiency of the Natural Resources Canada (the Office) has however examined the issue comprehensively and has the following advice –

- “(a) ten seconds of idling can use more fuel than turning off the engine and restarting it;
- (b) every ten minutes of idling costs you at least one fifth of a litre in wasted fuel – and up to two fifths of a litre if your vehicle has an eight-cylinder engine. Keep in mind that every litre of gasoline you use produces 2.4 kilograms of carbon dioxide;
- (c) restarting a car many times has little impact on engine components such as the battery and the starter motor. The wear on parts that restarting the engine causes adds about Canadian \$10 (about HK\$77) a year to the cost of driving – money you can recover several times over in fuel savings;
- (d) catalytic converters stay warm for up to 25 minutes after you turn off the engine, so frequent stops and starts do not produce the large amount of harmful emissions seen with cold starts. There is no question about it – idling gets you nowhere; instead, it wastes fuel, money and damages the environment.”

6. It is relevant to note that idling causes damage to the engine. The Office explains that the damage is caused by the engine not working at its peak operating temperature during idling. Hence, the fuel does not undergo complete combustion. This leaves residues that can

contaminate engine oil and damage engine parts.

Exemption of Rehabilitation Buses

7. Rehabilitation buses have to stop at roadside for picking up passengers, who can be the elderly, the infirm, etc. As with other types of vehicles, they are already exempted during boarding and alighting under the current proposal (paragraph 4(a) refers).

Further Exemptions

8. The exemptions outlined in para. 4 above have been mapped out having regard to the practical needs of the transport trades and the community's strong desire to improve roadside air quality and abate the nuisance caused by idling vehicles with running engines. We have received suggestions from the transport trades to extend the scope of the proposed exemptions. We will carefully consider these suggestions and any other views that will be received during the consultation, which ends on 31 March 2008, before firming up our final proposals.

Trade Consultations

9. Since 2001, the Environmental Protection Department has been working together with the transport trades to promote switching off vehicle engines during idling. A set of guidelines entitled "Stop Idling Engines Good for Every one" were also promulgated in 2001. Since the launch of the current consultation exercise in November 2007, we have organized nine consultation sessions with relevant bodies from the transport trades to solicit their views on the proposal. We will continue to liaise with the trades to exchange views on the proposal. We will carefully consider all the views collected in the consultation when finalizing our proposal.

Environmental Protection Department
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