

For discussion
25 May 2012

Legislative Council Panel on Transport

Requirement for Installing Reversing Video Device on Newly Registered Goods Vehicles

Purpose

This paper informs Members of the progress of an earlier proposal of the Administration to enhance the safety of reversing goods vehicles (GVs) by requiring the installation of reversing video device (RVD) on newly registered GVs.

Background

2. At the meeting of the Panel on Transport on 24 June 2011, the Administration briefed Members on the measures proposed to be adopted for enhancing the safety of reversing GVs, including consultation with the GV trade and vehicle suppliers on the proposed requirement of RVD installation on newly registered GVs.

Proposed requirement of RVD installation on newly registered GVs

3. Over the past few months, the Transport Department (TD) consulted the GV trade and vehicle suppliers on the proposed requirement of RVD installation on newly registered GVs. The proposal met strong objection from representatives of the Trucking Industry Associations (the Associations), who pointed out that the accidents involving reversing vehicles were caused by a handful of drivers and the problems involved could not be completely solved by the requirement of RVD installation alone. The Associations did not think that Hong Kong should deviate from the international practice by requiring through legislation the installation of RVD on newly registered GVs, given the absence of similar requirements in overseas countries or statistics to verify the

effectiveness of the device. The Associations also expressed worries over the sudden malfunctioning of RVD when the GV is being driven on the road as well as the consequential legal and insurance liabilities so borne by the vehicle owner and driver. They were of the view that the right approach for enhancing reversing safety was to strengthen drivers' training and their safety awareness. Representatives from the Goods Vehicle Drivers Associations have also objected to mandatory installation of RVD on GVs by legislation. They have expressed concerns over the durability and reliability of RVD operating under special environment and the enforcement actions against the malfunctioning of the device on a moving vehicle.

4. The GV trade supported encouraging RVD installation on a voluntary basis. They hoped that they would be allowed to choose the device they preferred, so long as it could meet the specified vision requirements, instead of having detailed specifications laid down by the Administration.

5. While understanding the trade's concerns, the Administration considers that RVD can improve reversing safety by reducing blind spots behind GVs. The feasibility of installing the RVD on newly registered vehicles has been confirmed except for certain vehicle types like tractors and trailers, which present difficulties in component matching. That means most GVs have suitable locations for installing RVD that can achieve the specified vision requirements. The vehicle suppliers have also indicated they can make arrangement to install suitable RVDs and to provide the necessary technical support to their clients. We plan to commence drafting of the relevant subsidiary legislation under our proposal and put forward the legislative proposal in the next legislative year.

6. The Administration's intention is to require RVDs, which have to be installed on newly registered GVs, to provide the driver with a visual image of the area directly behind the vehicle when it is reversing. As for the GVs with special vehicle bodies, such as those fitted with a crane on the rear and garbage trucks, the Administration may suitably lower the vision requirements of RVDs if there are technical reasons for not meeting the specified requirements in full.

7. Given the advice from the suppliers that RVDs may still be subject to failure from time to time and the concerns of the trade over the reliability of the device operating under special environment, the Administration plans to include defence clauses in the regulations in order to alleviate the trade's concerns on breaking the law and incurring associated liabilities in case the RVD suddenly malfunctions. Such clauses provide that GV owners or drivers will not be convicted for a malfunctioning of the device if it is proven that adequate steps have been taken to enable safe reversing of GVs and to repair the defect as soon as reasonable.

Measures to encourage RVD installation on existing GVs

8. At a meeting of the Panel on Transport held last year, Members requested the Administration to help identify reliable, durable and effective RVDs to facilitate retrofitting of such devices on existing GVs. In this connection, TD approached the Hong Kong Productivity Council (HKPC) and the Automotive Parts and Accessory Systems R&D Centre (APAS) for assistance. HKPC and APAS are in the process of developing and testing a wireless RVD system, and has planned to conduct a road trial on some government vehicles with the system to ascertain its proper functioning and reliability. Separately, TD has obtained the consent of relevant parties to extend the trial to GVs of the trade. Four such GVs are expected to be installed with the wireless RVD system this month. The planned road trial will demonstrate the reliability of the device in actual operating environment, and verify the applicability of a set of durability testing protocols developed by HKPC and APAS. We expect that the trial will yield preliminary results three months after its commencement for review purpose. If the trial is successful, the device may be commercialised, and become an additional choice for selection by GV owners.

9. HKPC and APAS have indicated that they are willing to share their R&D experience and testing methods with TD. Subject to the trial results, TD will beef up the "Guide for the installation of Devices to Assist Reversing of Goods Vehicles", particularly the content on the durability of RVD, for the trade's reference.

10. According to a recent survey in February 2012, the percentage of GVs voluntarily fitted with RVDs has risen from 6% in 2008 to 20%. We believe that the abovementioned technical assistance provided to the trade will encourage more owners to retrofit their existing GVs with RVDs.

Advice Sought

11. Members are invited to comment on the Administration's proposal to require RVD installation on newly registered GVs for enhancing reversing safety.

**Transport and Housing Bureau
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