

For discussion on
27 November 2012

Legislative Council Panel on Transport Occupational Safety and Health of Professional Drivers

Purpose

This paper briefs Members on measures taken by the Labour Department (LD) to improve the occupational safety and health (OSH) of professional drivers, and the protection of professional drivers under the current legislative regime.

Background

2. The Occupational Safety and Health Council (OSHC) has conducted a survey on the health conditions of professional drivers which reveals that professional drivers are required to work in small cabins for a long period of time, lack stretching exercise and have irregular meal time. In addition, some drivers take diets high in calories and have smoking habit, and are susceptible to diseases like high blood pressure, high cholesterol and heart diseases in the long run.

3. Besides, some Members raised concern about the risk of driving work of professional drivers, and requested the Government to consider extending the coverage of the Occupational Safety and Health Ordinance (OSHO) to professional drivers' driving work, so as to enhance the OSH of professional drivers.

Improvement Measures

4. LD collaborated with OSHC and relevant workers' unions to promote OSH messages among professional drivers last year, with the main themes including prevention of musculoskeletal disorders and heat stroke at work. Apart from distributing OSH information leaflets and souvenirs during visits to their workplaces, we collaborated with the Hong Kong Physical Fitness Association to organise fitness exercise workshops for professional drivers to encourage them to perform fitness exercise regularly to prevent musculoskeletal disorders.

5. As the living and eating habits of professional drivers may lead to various health problems, LD collaborates with the Department of Health (DH) and OSHC this year to launch a series of activities with ‘Change for Health’ as the main theme. We make use of the following channels to disseminate to professional drivers the health messages of balanced diet, regular exercise, smoking cessation and less drinking, as well as prevention of heat stroke:

- (a) Outreach visits - We pay visits to public transport interchange areas or stations of buses, taxis, public light buses and trams, etc, factory loading areas and container terminals together with representatives of relevant workers’ unions. We distribute OSH information materials and souvenirs to professional drivers, and promote OSH messages directly to them.
- (b) Radio publicity - As professional drivers often listen to the radio at work, LD collaborates with the Radio Television Hong Kong to broadcast OSH tips after the traffic news to remind professional drivers to pay attention to OSH.
- (c) Publicity videos - We show publicity videos on mobile advertising media on board public transports to remind professional drivers to pay attention to occupational health, do stretching exercise regularly, and drink plenty of water in the hot summer.
- (d) OSH courses - An “Occupational Safety and Health of Professional Drivers” course is organised by OSHC to assist professional drivers to reduce accidents caused by work.
- (e) Health talks - Health talks on “Healthy Living of Professional Drivers” are delivered by representatives from LD and DH during gatherings of the motor transport industry.

6. LD is planning to collaborate with OSHC and relevant workers’ unions, and invite the Hong Kong Dietitians Association and Hong Kong Physical Fitness Association to launch a publicity campaign on healthy lifestyle and diet for professional drivers. The aim of this campaign is to provide counselling by professionals to encourage professional drivers to have healthy diet and perform

exercise regularly, so as to reduce the various health problems arising from living and eating habits. Besides, we plan to collaborate with individual bus companies, tram and coach companies to organise healthy lifestyle promotional activities to directly promote healthy living and diet to their professional drivers.

Legislative Regulatory Framework

7. We have reviewed the existing legislation relating to professional drivers. The Road Traffic Ordinance (RTO) covers road safety issues concerning all drivers (including professional drivers). These include the design and maintenance of vehicles and roads, drivers' driving skills, the use of vehicle security devices, and the behaviour of other road users. The Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations regulate the construction and maintenance of vehicles, including safety after alteration and driver's accommodation providing adequate protection against bad weather; the Road Traffic (Safety Equipment) Regulations regulate the safety equipment of vehicles (such as seat belts); as well as the Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations and the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations, etc.

8. In view of the scope of the provisions of the RTO, the OSHO does not cover the driver's seat of a vehicle. Nevertheless, the OSHO safeguards employed drivers' OSH while they are carrying out non-driving work, especially when their employers can reduce their risk of injury in a reasonably practicable manner in situations under their employers' control, such as providing the drivers with a safe and healthy working environment, and with appropriate tools for work involving manual labour or repetitive movements. Indeed, it is difficult for employers of professional drivers to fully ensure the occupational safety of drivers while they are driving, as drivers' driving attitude, road conditions and the behaviour of other road users are beyond their control in a reasonably practicable manner.

Way Forward

9. LD will continue to collaborate with OSHC, other relevant Government departments and workers' unions of the industry to proactively promote the improvement of OSH of professional drivers.

Labour and Welfare Bureau
Labour Department
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