

For information
19 July 2013

Legislative Council Panel on Transport
Review of Existing
Licensing Regime for Driving Motor Cycles

PURPOSE

This paper informs Members of the outcome of a review of the existing licensing regime for driving motor cycles.

BACKGROUND

2. On 10 January 2010, there was a fatal traffic accident involving a motorcyclist, who had more than 30 years of experience¹ in driving private cars and motorcycles, driving a motor cycle with an engine size of 599cc. After the accident, a Legislative Council Member suggested introducing a “graded licence system” based on the engine sizes of motor cycles for the issuance of driving licences to motorcyclists to improve regulation. In response to the suggestion, the Government has reviewed the relevant licensing and driving test requirements for driving motor cycles to see if the existing licensing regime needs to be changed.

3. By 31 December 2012, there were 39 741 licensed motor cycles and motor tricycles. The breakdown of the number of licensed motor cycles and motor tricycles by engine size is at **Annex A**. For driving motor cycles, there were 242 461 and 2 666 persons holding full driving licences and probationary driving licences respectively. For driving motor tricycles², the respective numbers of persons holding full and probationary driving licences were 242 453 and 2 666.

¹ The number of years of driving experience refers to the number of years for which the motorcyclist had been holding the driving licences.

² Drivers who have passed the driving tests for driving motor cycles will be issued with both driving licences for driving motor cycles and motor tricycles. On the other hand, for those who have passed driving test for motor tricycles, only driving licence for driving motor tricycles will be issued.

EXISTING LICENSING REQUIREMENTS AND DRIVING TEST ARRANGEMENTS FOR DRIVING MOTOR CYCLES

4. According to the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Laws of Hong Kong Chapter 374B) (“the Regulations”), a person who successfully passes the relevant tests for driving motor cycles can only apply for a probationary driving licence and must undergo a mandatory probationary period of 12 months. Within the probationary period, motorcyclists are subject to additional driving restrictions listed at **Annex B**. At present, there is only one category of full driving licence for driving motor cycles. A person who has obtained a full driving licence for motor cycles after the completion of the probationary driving period is permitted to drive any motor cycle without restriction on the engine size.

5. The driving test for motor cycle comprises three parts. Part A is a written test. Part B is a road competence test conducted at a designated driving school (DDS) to ensure that the applicant is competent to control a motor cycle. Upon successful completion of Part A and Part B, the applicant may practise with a motor cycle on a public road or at a DDS to prepare for taking the Part C test which is a road test to be conducted by a Driving Examiner of the Transport Department (TD). In accordance with the Regulations, the Commissioner for Transport has specified that the engine size of the motor cycle used for the test should be not less than 125cc. The objective of such specification is to ensure that candidates’ ability to drive a motor cycle can be fully assessed.

OUTCOME OF THE REVIEW

6. We have looked into the statistics of traffic accidents involving motor cycles to see if motor cycles of larger engine sizes would have higher accident rate, and hence change of the current licensing regime for driving motor cycles is justified. We have also studied the driving test arrangements and licensing requirements for driving motor cycles in 31 overseas jurisdictions to see if there would be useful reference for Hong Kong. Details of the review results are set out in the ensuing paragraphs.

Statistics of traffic accidents involving motor cycles

7. Statistics concerning accident involvement rates of motor

cycles at **Annex C** show a continuously decreasing trend in the past sixteen years. The number of vehicle involvements per 1 000 licensed motor cycles dropped from 117.1 in 1997 to 57.7 in 2012. In fact, since the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme for motorcyclists was effected in October 2000, the accident involvement rate of motor cycles has decreased by nearly 50%.

8. According to the accident statistics concerning motor cycles in **Annex D**, there was no clear correlation between the accident rate and the engine size of a motor cycle, i.e. motor cycles of larger engine sizes were not more prone to accidents. We have further looked at the breakdown of the accident statistics by driving experience of motorcyclists involved. We did not find any evidence showing that inexperienced motorcyclists (i.e those with less than 2 years of driving experience) were more prone to traffic accidents than experienced motorcyclists when driving motor cycles of large engine size.

9. An analysis of the factors contributing to accidents involving motor cycles of engine size above 400 cc at **Annex E** revealed that driver's inability to control motor cycle was not a major cause of the accidents involving motor cycles of large engine sizes. Taking 2012 as an example, only 16% of accidents were due to the drivers' loss of control of their motor cycles whereas 41% were due to non-driver factors.

Overseas practices

10. We have also studied the driving test arrangements and licensing requirements for driving motor cycles in 31 overseas jurisdictions. Among them, only 9 jurisdictions have tiered licensing regime for ensuring that motorcyclists have the ability to control motor cycles of larger engine sizes. For the remaining 22 jurisdictions, 14 have only one category of driving licence for motorcyclists whereas 8 have two or three categories of driving licences aiming to restrict learner drivers to use motor cycles of exceptionally low power to drive on certain roads.

11. In summary, there is no clear trend among overseas jurisdictions to have a tiered licensing regime for the purpose of ensuring that motorcyclists would have the ability to control motor cycles of larger engine sizes. More detailed information on overseas practices is at **Annex F**.

CONCLUSION

12. In the light of the findings in paragraphs 7 to 11 above, the Government is of the view that there is no obvious justification for changing the existing licensing regime for driving motor cycles. Nevertheless, we will continue to monitor the relevant statistics and overseas practices to see if changes are warranted in future.

ADVICE SOUGHT

13. Members are invited to note the contents of this paper.

Transport and Housing Bureau
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Annex A

**Number of Licensed Motor Cycles and Motor Tricycles
by engine size in 2012**

Engine Size	Number of Licensed Motor Cycles and Motor Tricycles
Electric	28
≤125 cc	3 458
126–250 cc	19 846
251–400 cc	8 906
401-750 cc	4 802
>750 cc	2 701
Total	39 741

Annex B

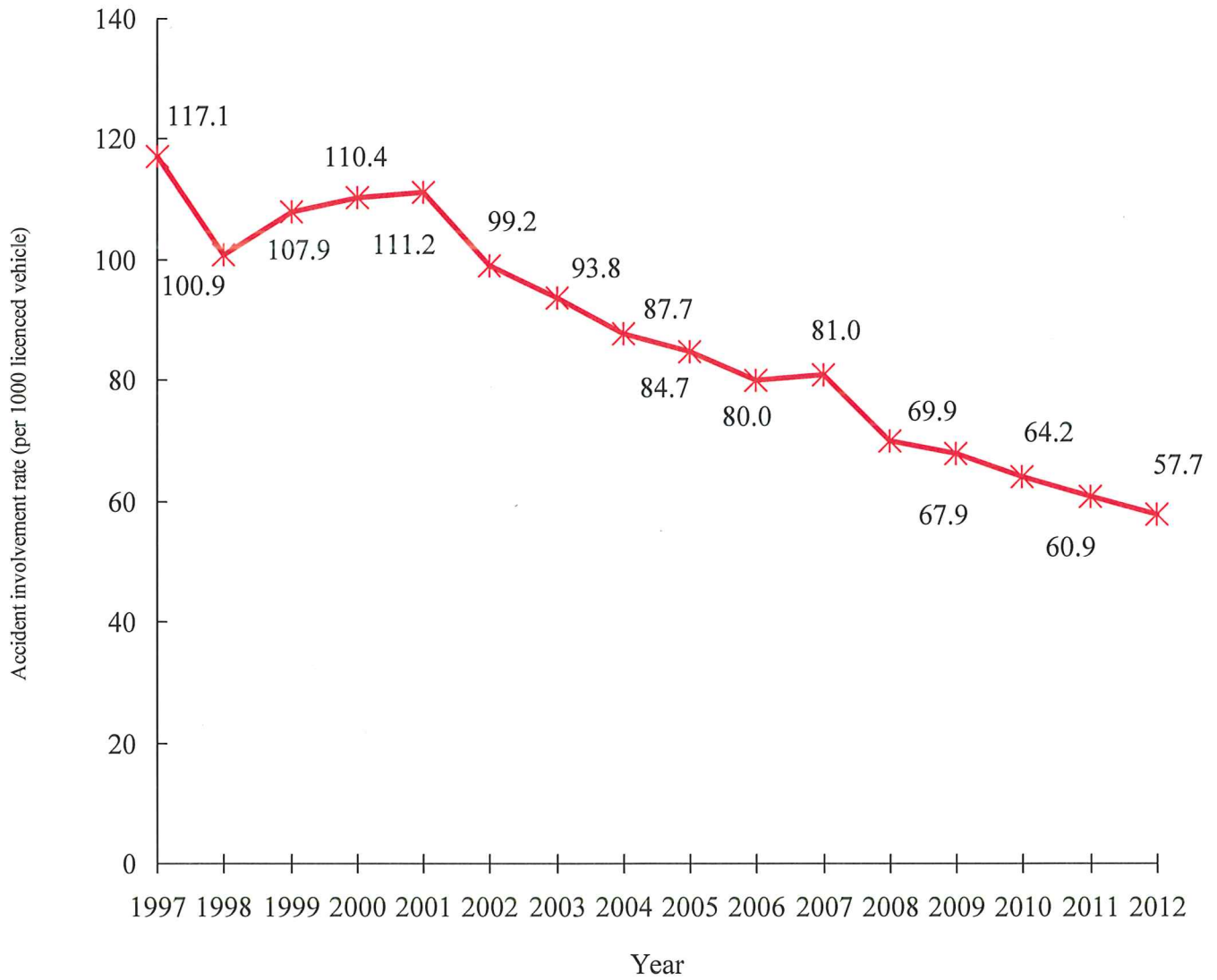
**List of Additional Restrictions on
Holders of a Probationary Driving Licence**

Probationary driving licence holders are:

- (1) required to display "P" plate at the front and rear of the vehicle they are driving;
- (2) not allowed to carry any passenger on the motor cycle or motor tricycle they are driving;
- (3) not allowed to drive their vehicles at a speed in excess of 70 km/h, even if they are driving on roads with speed limit above 70 km/h; and
- (4) not allowed to drive their vehicles on the offside lane of expressways where there are 3 or more traffic lanes.

Annex C

**Accident involvement rate of motor cycles and motor tricycles in
1997-2012**



Annex D

**Statistics on Road Traffic Accidents involving Motor Cycles
between 2009 and 2012**

Table D.1 Accident involvement rate of motor cycle by engine size

(Accident involvement rate = number of motor cycles of a specific engine size involved in accidents over total number of licensed motor cycles and motor tricycles of the same engine size)

Engine size	Accident rates			
	2009	2010	2011	2012
≤125 cc	0.11	0.11	0.10	0.10
126-250 cc	0.06	0.06	0.06	0.05
251-400 cc	0.06	0.06	0.05	0.05
401-750 cc	0.05	0.05	0.05	0.05
>750 cc	0.04	0.07	0.03	0.03

Table D.2(a)-(d) Distribution of accidents by engine size of motor cycles and motor tricycles involved and by years of driving experience of motorcyclists involved, 2009-2012

(a) 2009		
Engine size	Number of Motorcyclists involved	
	Inexperienced motorcyclists	Experienced Motorcyclists
≤125	51 (10.6%)	239 (12.4%)
126-250 cc	289 (60.2%)	1 055 (54.8%)
251-400 cc	95 (19.8%)	379 (19.7%)
401-750 cc	31 (6.5%)	187 (9.7%)
>750 cc	14 (2.9%)	65 (3.4%)
Total	480 (100%)	1 925 (100%)

(b) 2010		
Engine size	Number of Motorcyclists involved	
	Inexperienced motorcyclists	Experienced motorcyclists
≤125 cc	42 (11.0%)	250 (12.9%)
126-250 cc	204 (53.3%)	1 016 (52.5%)
251-400 cc	85 (22.2%)	354 (18.3%)
401-750 cc	35 (9.1%)	195 (10.1%)
>750 cc	17 (4.4%)	120 (6.2%)
Total	383 (100%)	1 935 (100%)

(c) 2011		
Engine size	Number of Motorcyclists involved	
	Inexperienced motorcyclists	Experienced motorcyclists
≤125 cc	63 (14.9%)	228 (13.3%)
126-250 cc	224 (52.8%)	940 (54.9%)
251-400 cc	65 (15.3%)	312 (18.2%)
401-750 cc	57 (13.4%)	164 (9.6%)
>750 cc	15 (3.5%)	68 (4.0%)
Total	424 (100%)	1 712 (100%)

(d) 2012		
Engine size	Number of Motorcyclists involved	
	Inexperienced motorcyclists	Experienced motorcyclists
≤125 cc	55 (14.5%)	256 (15.2%)
126-250 cc	186 (48.9%)	824 (48.9%)
251-400 cc	68 (17.9%)	341 (20.2%)
401-750 cc	58 (15.3%)	187 (11.1%)
>750 cc	13 (3.4%)	78 (4.6%)
Total	380 (100%)	1 686 (100%)

Remarks :

- (1) Only accidents in which motor cycles of known engine size and motorcyclists of known years of driving experience were involved are covered for the purpose of compilation of the above statistics.
- (2) Inexperienced motorcyclists are those with less than 2 years of driving experience.

Annex E

Number of Motorcyclists Driving Motor cycles and Motor tricycles of Engine Size above 400 cc Involved in Accidents by Factors Contributing to the Accidents, 2010-2012

Factors	2010	2011	2012
Non-driver factor	110 (35%)	122 (40%)	138 (41%)
Lost control of vehicle	41 (13%)	35 (11%)	53 (16%)
To avoid collision or otherwise : swerving/stopping suddenly	59 (19%)	55 (18%)	51 (15%)
Driving attitude related factors <i>(including driving too close to vehicle in front, driving inattentively, overtaking on offside/nearside negligently, careless lane changing etc)</i>	76 (24%)	79 (26%)	78 (23%)
Other driver factor	31 (10%)	16 (5%)	20 (6%)
Total	317 (100%)	307 (100%)	340 (100%)

Summary of Overseas Practice

Jurisdiction	Number of categories of full driving licence for motor cycle	Objective(s) for setting up a tiered licensing regime for driving motor cycles	
		for ensuring that drivers would have the ability to control motor cycles of larger engine sizes:	for restricting learner drivers to use motor cycles of exceptionally low power to drive on certain roads
Australia - New South Wales	One		
- Victoria	One		
- South Australia	One		
- Tasmania	One		
- Australia Capital Territory	One		
- Northern Territory	One		
- Queensland	Two	✓	
- Western Australian	Three	✓	
Canada - Vancouver	Two		✓
China	Two		✓
European Union	Three	✓	
Japan	Four	✓	
Macau	Three	✓	
New Zealand	One		
Singapore	Three	✓	
Taiwan	Three	✓	
United Kingdom	Three	✓	
United States of America - Alaska	Two		✓
- California	Two		✓
- Massachusetts	Two		✓
- Michigan	One		
- Mississippi	One		
- Nevada	Three		✓
- New Jersey	Two		✓
- New York	One		
- South Carolina	One		
- Texas	One		
- Utah	Four	✓	
- Vermont	One		
- Washington	One		
- Wisconsin	Two		✓