

Bills Committee on
Road Traffic Legislation (Amendment) Bill 1999

Introduction

This paper sets out the Administration's response to the information requested by Members of the Bills Committee –

- (a) a breakdown of the accident statistics for inexperienced motorcyclists, private cars and light goods vehicle drivers by age;
- (b) whether the high accident involvement rate of inexperienced motorcyclists was attributable to the training, testing and licensing scheme run by the Hong Kong School of Motoring;
- (c) accident statistics for inexperienced motorcyclists, private car and light goods vehicle drivers in Singapore and Australia;
- (d) extending the probationary driving licence scheme to inexperienced drivers of private car, light goods vehicles or other types of vehicles; and
- (e) imposing a maximum speed limit on public light buses.

Accident Statistics for Inexperienced Drivers

2. A breakdown of the accident statistics for inexperienced drivers of motorcycles, private cars and light goods vehicles is at Annex A. The statistics show that inexperienced drivers of motorcycles of all ages had a much higher accident involvement record than those of private cars and light goods vehicles.

Training and Testing of Motorcyclists

3. Under the existing licensing system, a learner motorcyclist is required to enroll with a designated driving school for a mandatory training course to acquire the basic knowledge and skills. After passing part A (written test) and part B (competency test) of the driving test, a learner driving licence will be issued to the eligible applicant to enable him to practise on public roads for part C (road test).

4. There is no evidence to suggest that the high accident involvement rate of inexperienced motorcyclists is attributable to the training run by the Hong Kong School of Motoring. All the testing and licensing requirements are set by the Transport Department to ensure that there is consistency in the standards adopted for different categories of vehicles. Regular visits are also paid to the driving schools to ensure that the standard of instruction meets the Department's requirements.

Accident Statistics in Singapore and Australia

5. Australia and Singapore also adopt a probationary driving licence system. Singapore imposes a probationary period of 12 months on all newly qualified drivers while in Australia, the 12-month probationary period only applies to new drivers of private cars and motorcycles. The Administration does not have statistics of accident involvement rates broken down by inexperienced and experienced drivers in Singapore. In Australia, the accident involvement rate of inexperienced drivers of private cars and motorcycles was about 2 times of that of experienced drivers in New South Wales before the introduction of the probationary driving licence system in 1966 and the figure dropped to about 1.6 after the introduction of the system. However, we do not have further breakdown of the accident involvement rates of inexperienced drivers by type of vehicles.

Extension of the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme to drivers of private cars and light goods vehicles

6. An analysis of the road traffic accidents in Hong Kong in the past five years (1995-1999) revealed that motorcyclists had a much higher accident involvement rate (an average of 21 per 1 000 drivers) than that of private cars and light goods vehicles (6.4 and 3.7 per 1 000 drivers respectively). Among motorcyclists, inexperienced drivers (i.e. those with less than one year of driving experience) had an accident involvement rate of about 5 times that of experienced drivers. For private cars and light goods vehicles, the accident involvement rate of inexperienced drivers was 1.8 and 1.9 times higher than those of experienced drivers respectively.

7. Given the significantly higher accident involvement rate of inexperienced motorcyclists in Hong Kong, the Administration therefore proposes to introduce a probationary driving licence system for inexperienced motorcyclists as a matter of priority.

8. The Administration would closely monitor the accident involvement rates of inexperienced drivers of other types of vehicles and the results of the probationary driving scheme for motorcyclists when considering the need for extending the scheme to other types of vehicles in future.

Imposing a Maximum Speed Limit on Public Light Bus

9. A Member suggested that the Road Traffic Legislation (Amendment) Bill 1999 should be amended to impose a maximum speed on public light bus, similar to that imposed on medium goods vehicle, heavy goods vehicle or bus.

10. The aim of the Bill is to address the high accident involvement rate of inexperienced drivers of motorcycles through the introduction of a probationary driving licence scheme. The speeding problem of public light buses is a separate issue which the Administration is looking into actively.

11. The Administration has been implementing a series of measures to tackle the speeding problem of public light buses, including stepping up of enforcement action against irresponsible drivers of public light buses and imposing new licensing conditions on new Green Minibus (GMB) routes requiring drivers of GMBs to be employed by licence holders in order to ensure that GMB operators would have the capability to effectively manage and control their drivers.

12. The Administration is also examining other measures which would further enhance road safety, including the feasibility of imposing a maximum speed limit on light buses. We will consult the public, the trade and LegCo Panel on Transport on these measures when they are ready.

Annex A

Percentage of drivers with less than one year driving experience which were involved in traffic accidents in 1999

Age Group	Motorcycle	Private Car	Light Goods Vehicles
Under 20	26.7%	2%	1.1%
20-24	3.5%	0.37%	0.18%
25-29	0.5%	0.08%	0.03%
30-34	0.1%	0.03%	0.009%
35-39	0.04%	0.02%	0.003%
40 or above	0.02%	0.005%	0.002%
Overall	0.33%	0.05%	0.01%