

LCQ20: Monitoring vehicle safety

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Following is a question by the Hon Frederick Fung Kin-kee and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (March 17):

Question:

In view of the serious safety problems in recent months of the vehicles manufactured by Toyota Motor Corporation of Japan, which were caused by faulty design and malfunctioning components, etc., will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether the authorities had received complaints about vehicle safety problems in the past five years, and how such complaints were handled;

(b) of the counter-measures adopted by the authorities to address the aforesaid problems; and

(c) of the details of the existing legislation related to the monitoring of the safety of imported vehicles; whether the authorities had, in the past five years, reviewed the measures for monitoring vehicle safety (including whether the monitoring measures are too passive and lax, as well as too reliant on self-monitoring by vehicle manufacturers); if they had, of the outcome; whether a comprehensive review will be conducted and improvements will be made in response to the aforesaid incident?

Reply:

President,

The Government attaches great importance to vehicle safety. My reply to the three parts of the question is as

follows:

(a) In the past five years, the Transport Department (TD) did receive complaints about the performance or quality of individual vehicle models. These complaints, however, did not involve design errors or potential safety risks of concerned vehicle models. If such complaints are received, the TD will take the initiative to contact the vehicle dealers and request them to take appropriate follow-up actions promptly.

(b) Regarding the recent recall for certain vehicle models announced by Toyota Motor Corporation (Toyota) of Japan, upon learning about the recall exercises in the United States and Japan, the TD had contacted immediately the local Toyota dealer seeking information about the situation and whether the Toyota vehicle models sold in Hong Kong would be affected. The local dealer confirmed that the models recalled overseas, except Prius 250, are not sold in Hong Kong. Among the Prius 250 vehicle models sold in Hong Kong, only those that were manufactured between April 2009 and January 2010 have to be recalled. A total of 270 vehicles will be affected. The recall aims at upgrading the computer software for the anti-lock braking system to improve the performance of the braking system under exceptional environment and road surface.

To help the dealer notify affected vehicle owners promptly, the TD has uploaded relevant recall information onto its website for public inspection. If the dealer has any difficulties in notifying the owners, the TD will also assist in informing individual vehicle owners to facilitate the early completion of the recall exercise. As at March 10, the dealer has contacted all the affected owners and completed software upgrade for 260 vehicles concerned. The TD will continue to follow up on the matter to ensure smooth completion of the exercise.

(c) The Administration keeps a close watch over the quality of imported vehicles to ensure safety. According to Section 53 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374), no person shall sell, supply or hire a motor vehicle for delivery in such a condition that the use of it on a road would contravene any provision of the Ordinance with respect to the construction or weight of that vehicle or its equipment. Section 5(1) of the Road Traffic (Construction and Maintenance of Vehicles) Regulations (Cap 374A) states that all body work and fittings of every vehicle shall be soundly and properly constructed of suitable materials and shall be in good and serviceable condition. Such stipulations aim at ensuring the safety and road worthiness of all vehicles.

The TD requires all imported vehicle models to go through the type approval process. Applicants have to provide relevant particulars, such as the information on the braking system, standard of the safety belts and specification of safety glass, to prove that the construction of the model concerned is safe. The model has to pass the vehicle examination as well to ensure compliance with the Ordinance (Cap 374) and its subsidiary regulations before it may be sold, registered, licensed and driven on the road.

We consider our measures to monitor the safety of imported vehicles adequate. The TD will continue to monitor recalls by overseas manufacturers and liaise with local dealers to ensure vehicle safety.

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