

LCQ9: Effectiveness of Probationary Driving Licence Scheme extended to private cars and light goods vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Jeffrey Lam Kin-fung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (June 8):

Question:

Since February 2009, the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme ("P Licence Scheme") has been extended from motor cycles and motor tricycles to private cars and light goods vehicles. Any person who applies to take and obtains a pass in a private car or light goods vehicle driving test is required to apply for a probationary driving licence ("P Licence") first and is subject to a number of additional driving restrictions. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(a) since February 2009, of the numbers of holders of P Licence for private cars and light goods vehicles prosecuted each year for not displaying a "P" plate on their vehicles, and speeding offences (which includes driving at a speed in excess of 70 kilometres per hour on roads with speed limit above 70 kilometres per hour), as well as driving on the offside lane of expressways where there are three or more traffic lanes;

(b) of the changes in the numbers of traffic accidents which involved holders of P Licence for private cars and light goods vehicles each year since the Scheme was extended to these two types of vehicles in 2009, and how such numbers compared to the numbers of traffic accidents which involved persons who had obtained a driving licence for these two types of vehicles respectively for less than one year in 2007 and 2008; and

(c) of the effectiveness of the P Licence Scheme for private cars, light goods vehicles and motor cycles since its implementation as assessed by the authorities; whether the authorities have planned to conduct a review; if they have, when they will conduct the review; whether they have planned to make any amendment to the Scheme; if they have, the direction of and the timetable for amendment?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to the various parts of the question is as follows:

(a) The figures provided by the Police on prosecution of holders of probationary driving licence ("P Licence") for private cars or light goods vehicles (LGVs) for not displaying a "P" plate on their vehicles, speeding and driving on the offside lane of expressways with three or more traffic lanes from February 2009 to April 2011 are set out at Annex I.

(b) Since the extension of the Probationary Driving Licence Scheme ("P Licence Scheme") to private cars and LGVs in February 2009, the numbers of drivers holding P licence for both types of vehicles involved in traffic accidents have become smaller than the numbers of private car and LGV drivers who had obtained a driving licence for less than one year and were involved in traffic accidents in 2007 and 2008. Detailed figures are set out at Annex II.

(c) The objective of the P Licence Scheme is to allow inexperienced drivers to accumulate more on-road driving experience. The P Licence Scheme for motorcyclists was introduced in October 2000. The accident involvement rate of novice motorcyclists has dropped since then. From 1996 to 2000, before the Scheme was introduced, the average annual accident involvement rate of novice motorcyclists who had held a driving licence for less than one year was 72 per 1,000 licensed holders. From 2001 to 2010, following the commencement of the Scheme, the rate dropped to 57. This indicates that the P Licence Scheme has helped reduce accidents involving novice motorcyclists.

Since February 9, 2009, the P Licence Scheme has been extended to private cars and LGVs. From 2007 to 2008, before the Scheme was extended, the average annual accident involvement rates of novice private car and LGV drivers holding a driving licence for less than one year were 5 and 3 per 1,000 licensed holders respectively. From February 2009 to end 2010, following the extension of the Scheme, the rates dropped to 4 and 1 respectively. This indicates that the Scheme is beginning to take effect in reducing accidents involving novice private car and LGV drivers.

Since the P Licence Scheme has been implemented for just over two years, we

need to allow a longer period and collect more data before more detailed analysis on the effectiveness of the Scheme could be made. We will continue to monitor the involvement of P Licence holders in traffic accidents and review the Scheme in a timely manner.

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