

LCQ12: Lighting, signing and guarding for road works

Following is a question by the Hon Cheung Hok-ming and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (November 10):

Question:

Some members of the public have relayed to me that at present, when the relevant government departments are carrying out repair works on expressways, the height of the directional signs erected on works vehicles for traffic diversion is only suitable for viewing by motorists at a far distance, while motorists near the signs for traffic diversion can hardly be aware of the signs, and hence can cause confusion easily and pose danger to both motorists and road repair workers. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (a) of the numbers of traffic accidents which occurred on expressways in the past three years, the resultant casualties and, among these accidents, the cases that involved road sections undergoing repair works; and
- (b) whether it will conduct a review on the height of the said directional signs for traffic diversion, and consider installing additional directional signs of an appropriate height for viewing by motorists from a close distance?

Reply:

President,

My reply to the two parts of the question is as follows:

- (a) From 2007 to 2009, the annual numbers of traffic accidents which occurred on expressways were 1,027, 934 and 908 respectively. The number of casualties resulting from the accidents were 1,724, 1,453 and 1,475 respectively. Separately, according to the records of the Highways Department, the numbers of traffic accidents involving works vehicles in the vicinity of works sites on expressways during those three years were 19, 28 and 20 respectively. As regards the resultant casualties, the Department does not maintain such records.

(b) When road works are being carried out, it is the responsibility of personnel who are in charge of the works to ensure that there are appropriate lighting, signing and guarding, so as to minimise inconvenience and potential hazards to road users. As far as expressways are concerned, owing to the relatively high speed of the traffic, it is of utmost importance that clear advance warning of road works obstructions is given; hence, there is particular need to plan road works on expressways with due care.

In accordance with Road Traffic (Traffic Control) Regulations (Cap. 374G), the Highways Department has published a "Code of Practice for the Lighting, Signing and Guarding of Road Works" (Code of Practice) which sets out the requirements for the provision of lighting, signing and guarding for road works. Personnel responsible for the works must provide and install lamps, traffic signs and road-markings in accordance with the Code of Practice. The Code of Practice was drawn up by Highways Department with reference to international standards (e.g. USA, European countries, etc.) and local past experience. It provides details (e.g. size, colour, material, conditions of use, and the number, spacing and height when installed, etc.) of each facility having regard to the traffic speed of the road and road closure requirement, such that the concerned road users can clearly see the appropriate signs from the expected distance, thereby achieving the anticipated protective effects.

In general, when road works are carried out within the lane(s) of a carriageway already closed to traffic, taking into account the road type, characteristics and traffic speed, the construction site staff must install the required advance warning signs, road hazard warning lanterns and traffic cones of appropriate height, etc, at a safe distance from the works site so as to provide ample warning to approaching vehicles. For example, for road works on an expressway, construction site staff must install advance warning signs at 600 metres, 400 metres and 200 metres in front of the works site. The centre of the signs must be at a height of at least 0.9 metre from the road surface, and the signs must be made of retro-reflective material. The works site must also be surrounded by traffic cones with road hazard warning lanterns installed at a height of 1.2 metres from the road surface, so as to enable approaching motorists to see them clearly.

In the case of carrying out mobile operations (such as road gully clearing, road lighting maintenance or road sweeping and cleansing), construction site staff must

plan the works thoroughly beforehand and as far as possible schedule the works for periods when potential hazard and the degree of inconvenience are low. The works vehicles must be escorted by a shadow vehicle equipped with a flashing arrow sign and a truck-mounted attenuator; and in addition to the flashing arrow sign, the rear end of the shadow vehicle must also bear a warning sign in high-contrast colours within a height of 1.5 metres from the road surface which would allow motorists to easily spot the works vehicles in front no matter they are near or far from them, so that accidents can be avoided.

As observed by the Highways Department, the operation of the measures stipulated in the Code of Practice as mentioned above is generally satisfactory and could achieve the expected protective effect. The Highways Department will however continue to monitor the safety conditions of road works and review the Code of Practice if considered necessary.

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