

LCQ15: Platform safety of MTR stations

Following is a question by the Hon Kam Nai-wai and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Ms Eva Cheng, at the Legislative Council meeting today (March 2):

Question:

Regarding platform safety in railway stations of the MTR Corporation Limited ("MTRCL"), will the Government inform this Council:

(a) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, the number of staff deployed by MTRCL at station platforms during train service hours to assist in regulating passenger flows and advise passengers not to bump into or charge the train doors, with a breakdown by rail line, name of station, whether or not platform screen doors ("PSDs") or automatic platform gates ("APGs") are installed, as well as the place and time periods of such staff deployment; whether additional staff are deployed by MTRCL during peak hours to maintain order at station platforms; if so, of the details (including the number of additional staff so deployed and the criteria and time periods for such deployment); if not, the reasons for that; whether MTRCL has reviewed the adequacy of its existing manpower and the effectiveness of deploying staff to maintain order at platforms; if it has, of the details, if not, the reasons for that;

(b) whether it knows, in each of the past three years, the number of MTRCL staff falling onto rail tracks while maintaining order, with a breakdown by rail line, name of station, whether or not PSDs or APGs are installed and the working hours of the staff; whether there are means to prevent staff working at platforms without PSDs or APGs from falling onto the tracks, and whether the effectiveness of such means has been reviewed; if so, of the details, if not, the reasons for that;

(c) whether it knows if MTRCL had compiled statistics in each of the past five years on delays in train service and other consequences caused by passengers falling onto rail tracks due to various reasons; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(d) given that in his reply to a question raised by a Member of this Council on June 9, 2010, the Secretary for Transport and Housing indicated that a number of measures (such as installing platform gap fillers and yellow tactile strips in the gaps and along

the edges of the platforms, installing illumination and flashing lights under the platforms and at the edge of the platforms respectively, installing CCTV systems at platforms, broadcasting announcements at platforms and in train compartments, as well as conducting education activities, etc.) had been taken by MTRCL in order to prevent passengers from falling onto the tracks in stations where PSDs or APGs had not been installed, whether it knows:

(i) if MTRCL had reviewed the effectiveness of those measures and explored other more effective options in the past three years; if it had reviewed and explored, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(ii) if MTRCL has put in place a mechanism to inspect and maintain such facilities on a regular basis; if it has, of the details and the resources (including the amount of expenditure) put in; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

For the various parts of the question, our reply is set out below:

(a) All platforms of the various railway lines of the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL) are always manned by station staff during operating hours of the day. In general, during the morning and evening peak hours and at stations with busier traffic (Note 1), the passenger flow is heavier and MTRCL will arrange more staff and platform assistants to assist with crowd control and maintain order. For the Light Rail, MTR staff patrol Light Rail stops regularly and maintain close communication with the operation control centre in order to provide assistance to passengers. During peak hours, MTRCL also arranges platform assistants at Light Rail stops with high passenger flow (Note 2) to assist passengers in boarding and alighting Light Rail vehicles.

The major duties of station staff and platform assistants include: (i) reminding passengers to queue up and maintain order of waiting passengers before arrival of trains; (ii) reminding passengers to queue up if they are not standing in the waiting queue; (iii) preventing passengers from walking through queues, and making sure that they stand behind the yellow line; (iv) monitoring whether there is congestion of passengers and taking necessary actions to ease the congestion; and (v) assisting

passengers in boarding and alighting trains, and preventing passengers from rushing into trains when train doors are closing.

MTRCL will arrange station staff and platform assistants to assist with crowd control at platforms considering the needs of different railway lines and stations. Instead of being assigned to perform duty at a designated station, these station staff and platform assistants will be deployed according to the needs of different stations and time periods. In fact, MTRCL has strengthened related manpower according to the overall need so as to provide better service to passengers. According to information provided by MTRCL, over the past three years, the number of station staff and platform assistants performing duties at heavy and light rail platforms increased from 1,073 in 2008 to 1,118 in 2009 and 1,172 in 2010. MTRCL conducts review on related staff establishment regularly and makes appropriate adjustments whenever necessary.

MTRCL introduces new measures from time to time in order to strengthen passenger safety awareness when they travel on the MTR, and appeals to passengers to maintain good order. For example, since July 2010, during peak hours at MTR interchange stations (Note 3), platform assistants will hold up the "Stop" sign and activate the electronic whistle when train doors are about to close, in order to urge passengers not to attempt entering train compartments when train doors are closing. This measure will gradually be introduced to other stations of the MTR system, with a view to reminding passengers more effectively not to rush into train compartments when train doors are closing.

(b) Over the past three years, no MTR staff fell onto track when performing crowd control duties. In fact, all station staff or platform assistants performing platform duties are required to attend the related training before carrying out platform duties. They also need to attend refresher courses every year. Contents of the courses emphasise that, when performing duties at platform without platform screen doors or automatic platform gates, station staff and platform assistants must stand behind the yellow line, and that ensuring the safety of passengers and that of their own is the first priority.

(c) and (d) Passengers fall onto the track for various reasons, including: (i) falling onto the track by accident (e.g. under the influence of alcohol or medicine, due to sickness etc); (ii) suicides and attempted suicides; and (iii) trespasses onto the track (e.g. passengers trying to retrieve items fallen onto the track, crossing the track to the

platform on the other side, etc).

In the past five years, there were 61 cases of train service delay of eight minutes or more as a result of passenger(s) fallen onto the track.

The design of platforms at stations of the existing railway system is safe. MTR is a railway system carrying 1.5 billion passenger trips annually. In the past three years, the number of reportable events (Note 4) per million passengers carried is about 1.1 cases yearly. To raise the safety awareness of the passengers, MTRCL has been organising promotional campaigns from time to time. MTRCL also reviews and makes new plans for such promotional campaigns every year. Regarding trespassing cases in the East Rail Line, MTRCL installed additional notices indicating that entering tracks is forbidden at platforms of the East Rail Line in recent years.

As regards the relevant platform facilities, station staff inspect the related facilities on a daily basis to make sure that they are in good condition. MTRCL also conducts regular maintenance of such facilities. Since the expenses for the maintenance works concerned are part of the overall maintenance expenses of stations, MTRCL does not have breakdown for this individual item.

Note 1: Of the 84 MTR stations, platform assistants are already arranged for 73 busy stations, except Kwai Hing, Tai Wo Hau, Che Kung Temple, Shek Mun, Wu Kai Sha, Tung Chung, Asia World-Expo, Sai Wan Ho, Shau Kei Wan, Chai Wan and LOHAS Park Stations.

Note 2: Including Town Centre, Tuen Mun, Ming Kum, Shek Pai, Choy Yee Bridge, Tai Hing (North), Tai Hing (South), Ngan Wai, Prime View, Affluence, Tuen Mun Hospital, Siu Hong, Lam Tei, Leung King, San Wai, Hung Shui Kiu, Hang Mei Tsuen, Tin Yiu, Locwood, Tin Shui, Chung Fu, Chestwood, Tin Heng, Tin Sau, Tin Yuet, Tin Wing, Ginza, Tin Tsz, Tin Shui Wai, Tai Tong Road and Yuen Long stops.

Note 3: Including Tsim Sha Tsui, East Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Prince Edward, Mei Foo, Lai King, Central, Admiralty, North Point, Quarry Bay, Yau Tong, Tiu Keng Leng, Hong Kong, Tsing Yi, Hung Hom, Kowloon Tong, Tai Wai, Nam Cheong, Yuen Long, Tin Shui Wai, Siu Hong and Tuen Mun stations.

Note 4: Reportable events refer to the accidents and occurrences that are to be reported to the Government under the Mass Transit Railway Regulations (Cap. 556A).

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