

LCQ11: Measures to reduce traffic accidents involving taxis

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Pui-leung and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (February 16):

Question:

Regarding measures to reduce traffic accidents involving taxis, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of (a) the number of traffic accidents involving taxis and (b) the proportion of such number in the overall number of traffic accidents, in each of the past five years, with a breakdown by (i) the vehicle age group to which the taxis concerned belonged (i.e. below 10 years, 10 to 19 years, 20 years or above), and (ii) the age group to which the taxi drivers concerned belonged (i.e. aged below 30, 30 to 39, 40 to 49, 50 to 59, 60 to 69, 70 to 79, 80 or above);

(2) whether it will consider providing impetus for the taxi trade to establish a central database on rentee taxi drivers for easy reference by taxi owners/companies/administrators when they rent taxis to drivers, so as to reduce the potential risks associated with drivers;

(3) as it is learnt that some middle-aged and elderly taxi drivers have not undergone physical examinations regularly because of the high costs, whether the Government will introduce a mechanism to require taxi drivers to undergo regular health examinations, and provide related subsidies to elderly drivers;

(4) given that for the purpose of enhancing driving safety and service quality for taxis, starting from October 1, 2020, persons applying for a full driving licence to drive a taxi are all required to have completed the specified pre-service course and obtained the certificate, whether it knows the cumulative numbers of persons who have enrolled in the course and passed the relevant assessment so far, as well as the effectiveness of the course; and

(5) whether it will consider requiring all taxis in Hong Kong to be installed with driver assistance systems such as the Collision Prevention Assist and the Automatic Emergency Braking System?

Reply:

President,

Our reply to various parts of the Hon Chan Pui-leung's question is as

follows:

(1)(a) The number of traffic accidents involving taxis and the proportion of such numbers in the overall number of traffic accidents in the past five years are set out below:

	Year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021#
Number of accidents	3 837 (24.4 per cent)	3 916 (24.6 per cent)	4 198 (26.1 per cent)	3 408 (22.3 per cent)	4 081 (23.2 per cent)

Provisional figures

Note: Figures in brackets are the proportion of traffic accidents involving taxis to the overall number of traffic accidents.

(b)(i) Pursuant to part (a) above, the breakdown of number of accidents by age groups of taxis is set out below:

Vehicle age groups	Year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021#
Below 10 years	2 269	2 623	3 171	2 683	3 312
Between 10 to 20 years	1 961	1 699	1 536	1 087	1 093
Above 20 years	0	0	0	5	54

Provisional figures

Note: As an accident may involve more than one taxi, the total number of accidents involving taxis by vehicle age groups is larger than the total number of accidents involving taxis in the same year.

(b)(ii) Pursuant to part (a) above, the breakdown of number of accidents by age groups of taxi drivers is set out below:

Age groups of taxi drivers	Year				
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021#
Below 30	45	54	49	39	73
30 to 39	308	305	352	291	315
40 to 49	671	596	658	541	635
50 to 59	1 557	1 554	1 583	1 170	1 387
60 to 69	1 321	1 464	1 616	1 381	1 540
70 to 79	205	195	285	235	396
80 or above	9	14	25	16	13

Provisional figures

Note: As an accident may involve more than one taxi driver, the total number of accidents involving taxis by age groups of taxi drivers is larger than the total number of accidents involving taxis in the same year.

(2) The Government welcomes and encourages the taxi trade to establish a database of taxi-related traffic accidents and claims on its own initiative. Through the provision and collation of information on taxi drivers, past traffic accident and claim records by the trade, taxi operators can identify drivers with poor driving records from the database. In addition, the establishment of such database could facilitate the trade to provide insurers with the information on drivers when taking out insurance policies. This could allow insurers to assess the risk more accurately in order to determine the appropriate amount of premium while encouraging taxi drivers to drive carefully, thereby reducing traffic accidents.

(3) According to the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B) (the Regulations), all driving licence holders, including taxi drivers, are responsible for ensuring that they are physically fit to drive before they are allowed to drive a vehicle. The Regulations stipulate that when a person aged 70 or above applies for a full driving licence of any class of vehicle, that person must provide a medical certificate issued by a registered doctor to prove that he/she is medically fit to drive or control that particular class of vehicle.

The Government has all along been concerned about the physical fitness of drivers and understands that the physical condition of drivers is important to ensure the safety of road users. The Transport Department (TD) is currently reviewing the mechanism of physical fitness certificate of driving licence holders and will consult relevant stakeholders (including members of the trade) upon completion of the review. As the recommendations of the review will have impact on different stakeholders, the TD will carefully study the views collected, including the feasibility of the recommendations and their impact on the trade, before finalising the outcome of the review.

The TD organises the Safe Driving and Health Campaign for commercial vehicle drivers (including taxi drivers) each year to provide free health tests for participating drivers. To encourage the public transport trade to receive the COVID-19 vaccination, the TD also provided a one-off medical check-up service for taxi and public light bus drivers in 2021. As regards the suggestion of providing elderly taxi drivers with subsidies for regular health tests, it would involve long-term resources and use of public funds and hence, the Government must consider carefully.

(4) To enhance the safety and quality of taxi services, starting from October 1, 2020, all applicants for a full taxi driving licence must attend and complete a pre-service course for taxi drivers at a pre-service training school designated by the Commissioner for Transport and obtain a course certificate, in addition to passing the relevant written test, within one year prior to applying for the full driving licence before they can be issued with a full driving licence. The course covers knowledge of driving safety

and road safety which help to enhance the awareness of driving safety of taxi drivers.

To ensure the effectiveness of the course, the students must attend and complete the entire course (with 100 per cent attendance), show satisfactory performance in class (including being attentive in class and actively participating in class and group discussion) as well as passing the written test at the end of the course, before they can obtain the course certificate issued by relevant pre-service training schools and be issued with a full taxi driving licence.

During the period of October 1, 2020 to December 31, 2021, a total of 4 905 students attended the relevant course, among whom 4 834 students completed the course and obtained a course certificate. The TD will continue to monitor the implementation of the pre-service course for taxi drivers.

(5) The Government has always been open-minded about innovation and technologies that can effectively improve road and driving safety, and welcomes the introduction of driver assistance systems by vehicle manufacturers for various classes of vehicles. According to the TD's understanding, the taxi trade is conducting testing of various anti-collision warning, lane keeping warning and devices that could monitor drivers' condition and driving behavior. The TD will continue to follow up closely with the trade on the testing progress and effectiveness with a view to identifying suitable safety devices to be installed on taxis. If it is confirmed that the installation of safety devices on taxis is technically feasible and the car owners are interested in installing such systems, the TD will examine and approve the vehicles in accordance with the legislation to ensure road safety.

In addition, the Government has been encouraging the trade to apply for the Smart Traffic Fund, which has been set up to provide funding support to local organisations or enterprises for conducting research and application of vehicle-related innovation and technology, the scope of which also covers projects to improve driving safety. To date, among the projects approved, two aim to develop analytic systems and mobile applications to collect driving data and analyse driving behavior of taxi drivers so as to remind taxi drivers to pay attention to driving safety and improve their driving habit.

As regards the proposal to require all taxis to install specified driver assistance systems, it would involve numerous complicated issues such as whether the relevant systems are applicable to all taxi vehicle models, the effectiveness of the systems, etc. We keep an open mind in this regard and will closely monitor the development of relevant technology.