

LCQ13: Driving Improvement Course

Following is a question by the Hon Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (July 4):

Question:

The Transport Department (TD) introduced the Driver Improvement Scheme (DIS) in 2002 with an aim to improve the driving attitude of the participants, thereby reducing traffic accidents. From February 2009 onwards, persons falling within the following categories are required under the law to attend driving improvement courses offered by designated driving improvement schools: (a) persons who have been convicted of serious traffic offences, and (b) persons who have accumulated 10 or more Driving-offence Points (DOPs) within two years. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) in each of the past three years, of (i) the respective numbers of persons of the aforesaid two categories who attended driving improvement courses, (ii) the number of persons who, upon completion of such courses, had three DOPs deducted from their total number of DOPs incurred, and (iii) the respective numbers of persons who, within six months, one year and two years after having three DOPs deducted upon completion of the courses, incurred DOPs again or were disqualified from obtaining or holding a driving licence for having incurred 15 or more DOPs, with a breakdown by the type of vehicle they drove;

(2) as some members of the public have pointed out that DIS has been implemented for 16 years, and the contents of the driving improvement courses have remained the same and are outdated, whether the authorities will review and improve the course arrangements (e.g. adding new modes of training like road tests, developing different improvement courses for participants driving various types of vehicles, as well as offering courses with enhanced contents or increased training hours for participants who have repeatedly committed the same type of traffic offences) in order to enhance the effectiveness of DIS; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(3) given that according to the TD's information, the major factors involving drivers which contributed to the traffic accidents in recent year are (i) driving inattentively, (ii) driving too close to the vehicle in front and (iii) careless lane changing, whether the authorities will examine implementing measures to encourage drivers to attend on their own initiative driving improvement courses on a regular basis, so as to improve their driving attitude; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

The Transport Department (TD) launched the Driving Improvement Course (DIC) in September 2002 with a view to enhancing motorists' awareness of road safety and cultivating good driving behaviour. Motorists may attend the course voluntarily. Under the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap 374), the court may also, at its discretion, order motorists who have committed specified traffic offences to attend a DIC so as to improve their driving behaviour. To further enhance road safety, the TD introduced the scheme of obligatory attendance of the DIC with effect from February 2009. Under the Road Traffic Ordinance, save for special reasons, the court shall order motorists convicted of serious traffic offences (e.g. dangerous driving and drink driving) to attend a DIC. Furthermore, under the Road Traffic (Driving-offence Points) Ordinance (Cap 375), motorists who have accumulated 10 Driving-offence Points (DOPs) incurred for traffic offences committed during a period of two years shall also attend a DIC.

My reply to the various parts of the Hon Frankie Yick's question is as follows:

(1) In the past three years, the number of participants who completed a DIC either upon accumulating 10 DOPs incurred over a period of two years or upon a court order, as well as those among which had 3 DOPs deducted upon completion of the course, with a breakdown by vehicle class they are entitled to drive, are set out in Annex 1 and Annex 2 respectively.

Moreover, in 2015 and 2016, among the participants who had 3 DOPs deducted after completion of a DIC, the number of those who incurred DOPs again within six months, one year and two years, as well as those who were disqualified from driving for having incurred 15 or more DOPs, with a breakdown by vehicle class they are entitled to drive, are set out in Annex 3. As regards the information of 2017, since the periods of six months, one year and two years following completion of the course have not yet ended, the TD is unable to provide the relevant data.

(2) The main cause for many traffic accidents are often related to driving attitude. The DIC aims to address such situation and seeks to effectively instill in motorists a stronger sense of road safety and good driving behaviour through classroom teaching. The DIC covers the topics of Driving-offence Points System, safe driving concepts and prevention of traffic accidents, legislation and regulations on drink driving and drug driving, good driving attitude, etc. Course participants learn the subjects through, among others, classroom teaching, video demonstration and discussions. The course also covers cases of traffic accidents involving different classes of vehicles. The instructors will analyse the causes and consequences of accidents through discussion with participants. The content is designed to meet the main objectives of the course and the needs of participants.

The TD will review and revise the course content from time to time in the light of the trends of traffic accidents and relevant legislative amendments. For example, the TD enhanced the content relating to cycling in November 2017, including how the motorists should stay alert for cyclists on a road and the road safety matters that cyclists should take note of. The TD will also review the overall course coverage with a view to adding suitable

content targeting different classes of vehicles (such as large commercial vehicles reversing and travelling down slopes) to cater for the needs of different categories of motorists. At present, driving tests for applicants of driving licences are stringent and included road tests (except for taxis). These tests are effective in ensuring that successful applicants of driving licences have the competence and driving skills for driving the respective classes of vehicles. As such, we do not consider it necessary to include road tests in the DIC.

For motorists who have committed traffic offences repeatedly, they will be required to attend a DIC for every 10 DOPs accumulated within a period of two years; if they are convicted of traffic offence, they may also be ordered by the court to attend the DIC. Repeated offenders are thus required to attend the course again without any exemption, incurring additional time and money for the course in the process, so as to correct their improper driving attitude.

(3) To encourage motorists to enroll on the DIC voluntarily, participants who complete the course and satisfy certain conditions (Note) may have 3 points deducted from their total number of DOPs incurred. Moreover, the Government has been promoting through publicity and education the safety awareness of motorists when using the roads. The TD will continue to collaborate with the Road Safety Council and the Police to launch various publicity and education campaigns by means of announcements in the public interest, promotional flyers, carnivals, etc. to promote road safety and proper driving attitude among motorists.

Note: The conditions include the participant's satisfactory performance in the course (including fulfilling the required attendance, paying attention during the course, participating actively during in-class and group discussions, as well as passing written and practical assignments of the course). Moreover, the participant must neither have no DOPs or accumulated 15 or more DOPs on the date of completion of the course, nor have been deducted DOPs within the past two years.