

LCQ14: Handling of abandoned vehicles

Following is a question by the Hon Wilson Or and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (September 1):

Question:

It has been reported that the problem of public car parking spaces being occupied for a long time by abandoned vehicles has been serious in recent years. The work related to the handling of abandoned vehicles is undertaken respectively by a number of government departments such as the Hong Kong Police Force, the Lands Department, the Highways Department and the Transport Department. Quite a number of members of the public have criticised that the procedures for handling abandoned vehicles taking excessively long time to complete and the unclear delineation of powers and responsibilities among the various departments have rendered the relevant work ineffective. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

- (1) of the number of complaints received by the Government in each of the past three years about public car parking spaces being occupied for a long time by abandoned vehicles; among such complaints, the respective numbers of those (i) the processing of which was completed, (ii) which are being followed up, and (iii) which could not be processed, with a breakdown by type of the vehicles involved;
- (2) of the locations where the problem of abandoned vehicles is serious (set out by District Council district); if such information is unavailable, of the reasons for that, and whether it will compile the relevant information;
- (3) of the number of inspections conducted by the law enforcement agencies for handling abandoned vehicles, and the number of abandoned vehicles found, in each of the past three years; if such figures are unavailable, of the reasons for that;
- (4) given that the relevant government departments adopted on a pilot basis a modus operandi of joint clearance operations in handling the problem of abandoned vehicles in Yau Tsim Mong District in the first quarter of this year, of the effectiveness of such operations; the timetable for extending this modus operandi to other districts; and
- (5) whether it will consolidate the powers and responsibilities of the various government departments in handling abandoned vehicles and entrust the relevant work to a single government department; if so, of the details; if not, the practicable measures in place to further enhance the effectiveness of the relevant work?

Reply:

President,

The Government has been very concerned about the problem of abandoned vehicles occupying public parking spaces and causing obstruction to pedestrians and traffic. In this connection, relevant government departments have stepped up collaborative efforts and have been conducting joint operations with a view to proactively handling the issue on a continued basis.

At present, the Hong Kong Police Force (the Police) handles vehicles that pose immediate danger to road users or cause traffic obstruction pursuant to section 103 of the Road Traffic Ordinance (Cap. 374), whereas abandoned vehicles on unleased and unallocated government land other than public roads are dealt with by the Lands Department (LandsD) under section 6 of the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 28).

In order to handle abandoned vehicles that do not pose immediate danger to road users or cause obstruction on public roads (including public carriageway, public parking spaces, public footpaths and public transport interchanges) more effectively, since 2021, District Offices have been co-ordinating and planning the inter-departmental joint clearance operations. The Transport Department (TD) would, under the power delegated by the LandsD in accordance with section 6 of the Land (Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance, affix notices on abandoned vehicles on the abovementioned public roads. If the vehicles concerned remain in its original state upon the expiry of the notice period, the Highways Department (HyD) would be responsible for towing away the abandoned vehicles to the storage pounds managed by the LandsD for further action.

After consulting the Police, the LandsD, the Home Affairs Department, the HyD and the TD, my reply to the Hon Wilson Or's question is as follows:

(1) In 2019, 2020 and the first six months of 2021, the TD respectively received 18, 30 and 26 complaints in respect of occupation of public parking spaces by abandoned vehicles. The number of complaints with a breakdown by class of vehicles are tabulated below:

Year	Class of vehicles			Total
	Private Car	Motorcycle	Others	
2019	3	15	—	18
2020	11	19	—	30
2021 (from January to June)	15	10	1	26

Note: Other relevant departments do not specifically maintain a breakdown of complaints involving occupation of public parking spaces by abandoned vehicles.

For complaints received in 2019 and 2020, the TD immediately referred the cases to relevant departments for follow-up actions based on the location

and situation under complaint. Since 2021, according to the modus operandi of the joint operations, if the abandoned vehicles concerned do not pose immediate danger or cause traffic obstruction, the TD would pass the complaints to District Offices for handling in the joint clearance operations.

(2) In overall terms, there are complaints about abandoned vehicles in a number of different districts. For reference, information from the LandsD shows that there are relatively more cases in Yuen Long insofar as New Territories region is concerned, and for urban areas, there are relatively more cases in Hong Kong Island East and Kowloon West. Other relevant departments do not keep information in this regard.

(3) Currently, the Police would follow up on abandoned vehicles causing obstruction or danger, whereas the LandsD would follow up on cases involving unlawful occupation of government land. These follow-up actions are taken mainly in response to complaints from members of the public and referrals from other government departments/organisations, etc.

To monitor the utilisation of on-street non-metered parking spaces, the TD has been conducting half-yearly surveys on such parking spaces since December 2019. The number of on-street non-metered parking spaces that the TD inspected and the number of abandoned vehicles thus found between 2019 and June 2021, broken down by year, are tabulated below:

Year	Number of on-street non-metered parking spaces inspected	Number of abandoned vehicles found
2019	9 110	391
2020	20 413	302
2021 (from January to June)	15 470	499

In addition, the TD's contractors engaged for operation of parking meters would inspect all on-street metered parking spaces across the territory once every four days. Upon spotting any occupation of such parking spaces by vehicles without payment of parking fees or improper occupations, the TD will refer the cases to relevant departments for follow-up actions.

(4) and (5) For the above-mentioned inter-departmental joint clearance operations that are co-ordinated and planned by District Offices, the first joint operation was carried out in Yau Tsim Mong District in January 2021 on a trial basis, which covered over 40 locations in the district with more than about 110 abandoned vehicles successfully removed. Since then until now (that is, roughly in the six months that followed), the joint operations have been extended to 12 districts including Central and Western, Wan Chai, Kowloon City, Wong Tai Sin, Sai Kung, Yuen Long, Tuen Mun, Sha Tin, Sham Shui Po, Eastern, Tsuen Wan and Kwun Tong. As at July this year, a total of about 640 abandoned vehicles were removed in the joint operations conducted in various

districts. Subject to the progress of the joint operations and the situation of individual districts, the joint operations will be gradually extended to the remaining districts by relevant departments. In future, departments concerned will continue to carry out the joint operations to handle abandoned vehicles, or use other suitable means as necessary having regard to the situation of abandoned vehicles in various districts.

Having regard to the effectiveness of the joint operations and because the location as well as situation of each abandoned vehicle are different, enforcement actions still need to be carried out by different departments in accordance with relevant legislation in order to address the issue of abandoned vehicles. Inter-departmental joint operation is a pragmatic and effective way to tackle the problem.