

LCQ20: Assisting vehicle repair trade in obtaining repair information and techniques

Following is a question by the Hon Frankie Yick and a written reply by the Secretary for Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (December 16):

Question:

It is learnt that with the extensive use of electronic components in diesel vehicles of Euro IV and post-Euro IV emission standards, it is necessary for the vehicle repair trade to obtain the checkers and software of the On Board Diagnostic systems developed by vehicle manufacturers for these vehicles as well as the data collected from tests conducted by the original manufacturers (the software and hardware required for repair), so as to effectively repair the major parts of these vehicles. Some members of the local vehicle repair trade have indicated that as vehicle repair workshops in general can hardly afford to purchase and keep the software and hardware required for repair for various vehicle models, vehicle owners can only send their vehicles in need of repair back to the repair workshops designated by vehicle dealers for repair and, in the absence of competition, the repair services provided by the latter not only have failed to meet market needs, but also charged a fee on the high side. This situation has resulted in an increase in the operating costs of the transport trade and a gradual shrinkage of the room for survival of the vehicle repair trade. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it knows the number and percentage of vehicle repair workshops which closed down in each of the past five years and, among them, the number of those which closed down because they could not afford the software and hardware required for repair;

(2) as the European Union (EU) has required vehicle manufacturers to ensure that independent repair operators have easy, restriction-free, and standardised access to information on the repair and maintenance of vehicles, and not to treat authorised dealers and repair workshops differently, whether the Government will require that local dealers of new vehicle models must, upon payment of a reasonable fee by members of the vehicle repair trade, provide the software and hardware required for repair; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that;

(3) as the Government indicated in its reply to my question on February 17, 2016 that the Government would follow the practice of EU to include in the legislation the requirement for vehicle manufacturers to open up repair techniques, of the progress of the legislative amendment exercise; whether it has taken the initiative to gain an understanding from the vehicle repair trade of the opening up of repair techniques by vehicle manufacturers; if so,

of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(4) of the measures in place to assist the vehicle repair trade in keeping abreast of the latest vehicle repair information and techniques?

Reply:

President,

My responses to the questions raised by the Hon Frankie Yick are as follows:

(1) The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) launched the Voluntary Registration Scheme for Vehicle Maintenance Workshops since July 2015. Currently, there are 2 053 registered vehicle maintenance workshops. In the past five years approximately, a total of 74 vehicle maintenance workshops closed after registration. The EMSD did not collect statistics on the reasons for the closure. For non-registered vehicle maintenance workshops, there are no relevant records.

(2) and (3) The European Union has implemented the Euro VI vehicle emission standards since 2013 in which the relevant regulations require vehicle manufacturers to make available vehicle maintenance information to the public at a reasonable cost.

By legislative amendments, the emission standards for first registered vehicles were tightened in phases by vehicle classes to Euro VI since July 1, 2017 (except for diesel private cars, motor cycles and motor tricycles) in Hong Kong. Therefore, the vehicle manufacturers/authorised dealers are required to meet the requirements of Euro VI emission standards and make available vehicle maintenance information to the public at a reasonable cost. Currently, the vehicle manufacturers are providing various channels (e.g. web pages) for their customers to purchase the relevant information.

(4) The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) has been collaborating with the Vocational Training Council (VTC), authorised dealers and vehicle repair trade in organising seminars with a view to assisting the vehicle repair trade to upgrade their vehicle exhaust maintenance techniques. Most authorised dealers have been actively collaborating with the EPD in sharing the maintenance information for the vehicles under their brands to the vehicle repair trade in the technical seminars on the maintenance of diesel commercial vehicles. This enables the trade to provide proper maintenance services to the vehicles beyond warranty.

Since 2015, the EPD has organised 26 technical seminars on the maintenance of diesel commercial vehicles for the vehicle repair trade. The seminars were widely supported by the vehicle repair trade with a total turnout of 7 932 participants. In 2018, the EPD also collaborated with the VTC to deliver eight short courses on the maintenance of Euro VI diesel commercial vehicles and a total of 128 trainees completed the courses.