

LCQ21: Issuance of Hong Kong full driving licences and International Driving Permits

Following is a question by the Hon Andrew Wan and a written reply by the Secretary for Transport and Housing, Mr Frank Chan Fan, in the Legislative Council today (April 17):

Question:

Under the existing policy, holders of a Mainland driving licence may be issued a Hong Kong full driving licence directly without test, and Hong Kong residents holding a Hong Kong full driving licence may be issued an International Driving Permit (IDP). It was reported that a Chinese person holding an IDP issued by the Hong Kong authority had caused, due to inability to read the road signs in English, a traffic accident while driving in Australia on December 26, 2017, killing one person and injuring another. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) of the respective numbers of persons issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without test in each of the past 10 years who were holders of (i) a Mainland driving licence and (ii) a foreign driving licence;

(2) of the number of persons issued with an IDP in each of the past 10 years and, among them, the number of those who were persons mentioned in (1)(i); and

(3) whether it will tighten the arrangement whereby a person issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without test may obtain an IDP; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Under regulation 11(3) of the Road Traffic (Driving Licences) Regulations (Cap. 374B), the mechanism of "direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licence" allows a person holding an overseas driving licence issued by a "recognised country or place" to be directly issued with a Hong Kong full driving licence without taking a local driving test, for driving private cars, light goods vehicles, motor cycles and motor tricycles. As specified in the Fourth Schedule to the Regulations, there are 32 "recognised countries or places", including Mainland China (see Annex for details).

Pursuant to the Regulations, an applicant for direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licence must hold a driving licence, sometime within three years before the date of application, issued by a competent authority in any country or place listed in the Fourth Schedule of the Regulations authorising the applicant to drive vehicles of the class under application after

successful completion of a test of competence at the country or place. Moreover, the applicant must meet one of the following requirements: (i) the applicant was issued with the original licence during a period of residence of not less than six months in the country or place of issue; (ii) the applicant was issued with the original licence not less than five years immediately prior to the application; or (iii) the applicant is the holder of a passport or other equivalent travel document issued in the country or place in which the original licence was issued.

An International Driving Permit (IDP) is issued in accordance with the Regulations and the 1949 Convention on Road Traffic. Pursuant to regulation 36(1) and (2) of the Regulations, an applicant for IDP must be a holder of a full Hong Kong driving licence and a resident in Hong Kong, as well as meeting the corresponding age requirement.

My reply to the three parts of the Hon Andrew Wan's question is as follows:

(1) The number of applications for direct issue of Hong Kong full driving licences by the Transport Department (TD) on the basis of a Mainland driving licence or non-Mainland driving licence over the past ten years is set out in the table below:

Year	Number of Applications for Direct Issue of Hong Kong Full Driving Licence	
	On the basis of Mainland Driving Licence	On the basis of Non-Mainland Driving Licence
2009	13 655	14 720
2010	16 289	14 452
2011	19 675	14 981
2012	22 203	14 762
2013	24 810	13 204
2014	34 949	12 459
2015	37 680	12 187
2016	35 261	11 424
2017	35 765	11 834
2018	37 897	11 523

(2) The number of IDPs issued by the TD, and the number of applicants issued with IDPs by way of holding a Hong Kong driving licence issued directly by the TD on the basis of a Mainland driving licence, over the past ten years are set out in the table below:

Year	Number of IDPs issued	Number of applicants issued with IDPs by way of
2009	79 329	583
2010	91 766	779
2011	93 603	1 159
2012	111 532	1 800
2013	146 194	3 008
2014	175 794	4 092
2015	225 424	5 612
2016	253 725	6 307
2017	293 656	7 093
2018	315 458	7 694

Note: The figures cover Hong Kong driving licences in which the licences for all applicable vehicle classes, or at least the licence for one vehicle class, have been directly issued on the basis of Mainland driving licences.

(3) An applicant for direct issue of a Hong Kong full driving licence must fulfil the requirements stipulated in regulation 11(3) of the Regulations, including the requirement that the applicant's overseas or Mainland driving licence must have been obtained through passing of a comparable driving test held in the issuing country or place. Pursuant to regulation 36(1) and (2) of the Regulations, an applicant for an IDP must be a holder of a Hong Kong full driving licence. In other words, in case a holder of an IDP has obtained a driving licence by direct issue, he/she must have passed a relevant driving test overseas or in the Mainland. Since the above arrangements have been operating smoothly, we have no plan to make any changes at this stage.