Chapter 5
Driving Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

5.1 Road environment, vehicles and road users are all part of the road transport system. Among them, the human factor is the most complex and dynamic. Whether the road users follow traffic rules and adopt a careful and considerate driving attitude has a great bearing on road safety. Therefore, the Panel considers it vital to focus on ways to improve the driving attitudes of the motoring community.

IMPACT OF INAPPROPRIATE DRIVING BEHAVIOUR ON ROAD SAFETY

5.2 The Panel has reviewed the major contributory factors of traffic accidents in Hong Kong in the past ten years (i.e. 1993 - 2002) and notes that, on average, about 65% of accidents are driver related. Inappropriate driving behaviour commonly exhibited by drivers includes –

- driving too close to the vehicle in front;
- turning or reversing negligently;
- careless lane changing;
- driving at an inappropriate speed;
- failing to obey traffic signals; and
- late use of or failing to use indicators.
COMMUNITY VIEWS ON CAUSES OF TRAFFIC ACCIDENTS IN HONG KONG

5.3 Following the Tuen Mun Road incident on 10 July 2003, views were sought on ways to improve road safety from members of the public, including professional bodies, tertiary institutions and trade associations. A large number of those who made written submissions perceived that traffic accidents in Hong Kong were related to inappropriate driving behaviour. Common bad practices cited include driving at an inappropriate speed; prolonged occupation of the fast lane; tailgating; changing lanes without warning; overtaking using the slow lane; heavy vehicles ignoring light vehicles; failing to allow traffic to filter; and jumping red lights. Many considered that these problems were common along Tuen Mun Road.

5.4 The Panel received the following suggestions on measures to improve driving behaviour and the code of conduct for drivers –

- require drivers with 12 driving offence points to take a refresher course;
- impose mandatory driving courses for drivers of high-risk vehicles;
- require learners to attend improvement/advanced driving courses including driving on expressways;
- upgrade training of drivers, including drivers of buses and heavy vehicles;
- review training/test requirements to include elements of driving attitude;
- upgrade training/standard of driving instructors;
- review traffic blackspots and educate drivers; and
- launch education and publicity campaigns to improve driving behaviour and the general attitude of road users.
**IMPROVEMENT MEASURES**

5.5 The Panel considers that in order to improve driving behaviour and foster a considerate and responsible driving culture, the following measures would be most effective –

- publicity;
- driver training; and
- strengthened enforcement.

**SUSTAINABLE PUBLICITY PROGRAMME TO IMPROVE DRIVING BEHAVIOUR**

5.6 The Panel notes that publicity is one of the major non-engineering ways of influencing road users. It plays an important role in promoting road safety concepts, building awareness and promoting safety messages within the general community.

5.7 The Road Safety Council (RSC), which comprises both government and non-government representatives, is responsible for developing the annual road safety campaign, as well as monitoring and coordinating publicity activities. Road safety publicity in Hong Kong generally focuses on three main areas –

- changing road users’ attitude to make the road network safer for all;
- alerting the public about ways to prevent traffic accidents; and
- making road users aware of new legislation.

5.8 The RSC conducts year-round activities using various media including TV and radio announcements, outdoor advertisements, teaching kits, posters and pamphlets, and community outreach activities such as large-scale publicity events.
5.9 Since 2001, the RSC has adopted ‘Smart Driving’ as the main theme of its road safety campaign. The campaign aims to promote good and safe driving practices and highlights bad driving behaviour that increases the risk of accidents for drivers and other road users. The Panel notes from a recent survey that the campaign has been successful in raising alertness among various audiences. However, the effectiveness of the campaign in bringing about changes in actual driving behaviour requires further assessment.

5.10 Recently, a Working Group on a ‘Smart Driving Publicity Strategy’ campaign has been set up by the RSC with representatives from the Environment, Transport and Works Bureau, the Transport Department (TD), the Hong Kong Police Force (HKPF), the Information Services Department and three non-government organisations. The campaign will place greater emphasis on promoting ‘smart driving behaviour’ and encouraging drivers to abandon bad driving habits. The Panel endorses this approach.

5.11 The Panel is also pleased to note that the RSC has taken the initiative to develop a new Vision and a new Symbol to motivate the public, the Government and other relevant parties to focus their efforts in enhancing road safety. Competitions on the design of the Vision and the Symbol for the road safety campaign will be organised by the RSC in late 2003 and early 2004 respectively. The new designs will be used in all the activities, publications and publicity programmes of the RSC starting from mid-2004.

5.12 Following the Tuen Mun Road incident, the RSC revised its 2004 annual publicity programme. Professional drivers, and drivers of heavy goods vehicles and passenger services vehicles were identified as target groups for the publicity and education programme. More emphasis will also be accorded to driving on expressways. The Panel fully supports the RSC’s initiatives.

5.13 Road safety programmes are more likely to be successful if they address specific driving behaviour in a sustainable manner. Otherwise, drivers tend to revert to previous bad practices over time. The ultimate goal of the publicity and education programme is to change motorists’ driving behaviour to make them careful and considerate to all road users.
5.14 **The Panel recommends that, to ensure continuity, consideration be given to drawing up a longer term programme extending beyond the normal annual cycle. In addition, collaboration with District Councils should be actively pursued to extend the reach of road safety campaigns.**

5.15 The Panel considers that there is a need to measure the effectiveness of the publicity programme properly, particularly in respect of individual and self-employed drivers, to ensure that appropriate promotional strategies are adopted for different audiences.

5.16 **The Panel recommends that in addition to measuring public awareness of the publicity programmes, an evaluation methodology involving targetted surveys of the driving population be devised to assess the effectiveness of the programmes. Research on the evaluation methodology can be conducted in conjunction with local tertiary institutions.**

5.17 Apart from the publicity programmes conducted by the RSC, TD publishes the Road Users' Code that contains comprehensive guidelines for road users under most road and traffic conditions. TD has been making efforts to foster the road safety message to the public transport trade. For instance, a 'Road Safety Forum for Franchised Buses' is organised with participation of all franchised bus companies and HKPF. The forum has focused, among other things, on accident prevention measures for franchised buses. Between 2002 and July 2003, TD has organised eight road safety seminars for franchised bus drivers to promote road safety awareness and proper driving behaviour. TD also holds regular meetings with franchised bus companies to discuss bus safety issues. For other road passenger transport, including non-franchised buses, public light buses and taxis, TD has conducted a series of seminars and workshops for operators and drivers with road safety as one of the major discussion topics. TD also publishes regular newsletters to enhance communication with members of the trade. Information relating to measures and practices to enhance road and passenger safety is disseminated through these newsletters.
5.18 The Panel notes that the road safety seminars and meetings organised by TD are mainly targeted at companies with large vehicle fleets and transport trade associations. Self-employed or individual drivers without affiliation to any such associations may face practical difficulties in attending seminars and meetings of this nature.

5.19 The Panel considers that there is a need to reach out to self-employed or individual drivers, and recommends that additional avenues be identified to extend the coverage of the publicity work to cover them.

5.20 Regarding the approach to be adopted for publicity programmes, the Panel recommends that, apart from condemning aggressive driving behaviour, consideration be given to promoting good driving practices and fostering a considerate driving culture. A few examples of good practices are listed in Figure 5.1.

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**Figure 5.1 – Examples of good driving practices**

(A) Lane-changing discipline

(i) Always use the left-most lane unless you are overtaking.

(ii) Before changing lanes, check your mirrors and glance over your shoulder to check road conditions. Indicate your intentions well in advance.

(B) Expressway driving

(i) On entering an expressway, start matching your speed to the speed of vehicles on the expressway along the slip road.

(ii) When driving on the expressway, give due consideration to other vehicles entering the expressway from the slip road.
### (C) Stay alert

(i) Other drivers’ intentions can often be anticipated. Look out for signs, e.g. changes in the position of vehicles in lanes; drivers looking in their mirrors; and positions of the driver’s hands on the steering wheel.

(ii) Look out for inattentive drivers, especially those talking on mobile phones or turning to talk to passengers, as well as vehicles wandering in and out of lanes or following too close to the cars in front.

(iii) When being caught in slow moving or stationary traffic, watch out for motorcycles, which may be making their way in-between lanes.

### (D) Safe speed

(i) Keep a safe distance from the vehicle in front. A good guideline is to maintain a distance of a 2-second time gap away from the vehicle in front. Double the time-gap under wet weather.

(ii) Maintain a consistent speed where conditions permit.

### (E) Others

(i) Do not drive alongside other vehicles, particularly large trucks, for longer than necessary, because the truck drivers may not be able to see you. Also, other vehicles at your side may block your escape route in case of emergencies.

(ii) When approaching a stationary or slow moving traffic, use your hazard flashers to warn other up-coming vehicles behind that you are slowing down.

(iii) If a driver feels tired while driving, he/she should find a safe place to park the vehicle and take a break before continuing the journey.

(iv) Give way to buses waiting to move out from stops.

(v) Give due consideration to vehicles which have indicated their intention to change lanes.
Chapter 5

DRIVING TEST AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

5.21 The Panel believes that publicity programmes, seminars and talks are no substitute for formal courses of instruction and driving tests, particularly as a basis to ensure that drivers acquire the correct habits and attitudes from the start.

5.22 The Panel has reviewed the existing driving test and training requirements in Hong Kong and found them comparable to those of overseas countries such as Singapore and the United Kingdom. There is no imminent need to further tighten driving test standards and requirements. However, the Panel considers that the Government should take action to tackle driving attitude problems in the following ways, as discussed in paragraphs 5.23 to 5.33 below –

- mandatory courses for repeat traffic offenders;
- pre-service training for drivers of passenger services and commercial vehicles;
- Skills Upgrading Scheme for passenger services transport trades;
- probationary driving licence for new private car and light goods vehicle drivers; and
- Quality Driving Instructor Course.

Mandatory courses for repeat traffic offenders

5.23 The introduction of the Driver Improvement Scheme in September 2002 aimed to promote road safety and make drivers more law abiding through a better understanding of what proper driving behaviour and attitudes should be. Many developed countries have introduced similar schemes for some years and such schemes have been effective in reducing traffic accidents and inducing positive change to the driving attitudes. Currently, motorists are encouraged to join the Driver Improvement Scheme on a voluntary basis, except for those who are directed by the court.
5.24 The Panel recommends that the Government explore the feasibility of requiring drivers who have accumulated a certain number of ‘Driving Offence Points’ (for instance, 8 points or above, at the time when TD issues warning letters to such drivers) to attend the Driver Improvement Scheme on a mandatory basis to be trained on good driving practices.

Pre-service training for drivers of passenger services and commercial vehicles

5.25 Recently, TD has developed proposals to revise the entry requirements for taxi drivers. Under the new proposals, all applicants for a taxi driving licence will be required to attend a mandatory pre-service training programme before they can qualify for a taxi driving licence. This means that all new taxi drivers in future will undergo proper training on driving attitude and behaviour before they are permitted to drive a taxi.

5.26 The Panel recommends that TD review the effectiveness of the pre-service training requirement and consider extending it to drivers of public light buses followed by other professional drivers, in light of experience gained from the taxi scheme.

Skills Upgrading Scheme for passenger services transport trades

5.27 Currently the Vocational Training Council, supported by TD, is developing a Skills Upgrading Scheme for the passenger services transport trades (including taxis, public light buses, and non-franchised buses). The Scheme, scheduled for launch in early 2004, will provide comprehensive training to taxi, public light bus and non-franchised bus drivers. It will help improve driving attitude, knowledge of traffic rules and regulations as well as road safety concepts and skills for handling accidents and emergencies on roads. The Government will provide financial incentives (reimburse up to 70% of the training fee for the Scheme) to drivers from these passenger services transport trades who attend the Scheme on a voluntary basis.
5.28 The Panel recommends that the content of the Skills Upgrading Scheme be reviewed to ensure that sufficient emphasis will be placed on promoting good driving practices and that recognition be given to drivers who have completed the course to increase the incentive for enrolment. The Panel also recommends that the Government explore with the relevant organisations the development and introduction of similar skills upgrading training for drivers of the trucking industry, in light of experience gained from the passenger services transport trades.

**Probationary driving licence for new private car and light goods vehicle drivers**

5.29 Hong Kong’s expressway network is expanding rapidly. However, learners of all types of vehicles are not required to acquire field training on expressway before being issued with a driving licence. The Panel recognises that there are practical difficulties to include expressways as part of the training and testing requirements in Hong Kong, and notes that certain roads with speed limits of 70 km/h are open to learner drivers to practise their driving skills.

5.30 The Panel recommends that the Government explore the feasibility of expanding the existing ‘probationary’ driving licence arrangement for motorcyclists to cover new private car and light goods vehicle drivers. The proposed arrangement would allow drivers who have passed the driving test to obtain on-the-road practical experience, including expressway driving experience, during the ‘probationary’ period before being issued with a full driving licence.

**Quality Driving Instructor Course**

5.31 At present, there are two designated driving schools in Hong Kong. Learner drivers can also receive driver training from private driving instructors.

5.32 The Panel considers that there is a need to upgrade the skill level of driving instructors in tandem with the overall direction of enhancing road safety in Hong Kong.
5.33 The Panel recommends that TD explore the feasibility of introducing a ‘Quality Driving Instructor Course’ to ensure that driving instructors have the proper knowledge and teaching skills to pass on good driving practices to their students. The Course should aim to enhance the professional competency of driving instructors, including teaching skills, defensive driving skills, proper driving attitude and good practices, traffic rules and regulations, and the handling of emergency and accident situations. The Panel also recommends that recognition be given to driving instructors who have completed the course.

**Enforcement**

5.34 Apart from enhanced training, the success of any road safety initiatives also depends on a properly formulated enforcement programme. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6.