

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE ENVIRONMENT
(21.3.1994)

(ACE 12/94)
(For Advice)

Proposed legislation
to control motor vehicle noise

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to seek Members' advice on a proposal to make new Noise Control (Motor Vehicles) Regulations under the Noise Control Ordinance (NCO) for the purpose of controlling motor vehicle noise.

Background

2. Almost one million people in our city are exposed daily to unacceptably high levels of road traffic noise. The reduction of traffic noise exposure through control of the source of this noise is part of the solution to this problem. At present, control of vehicle noise is rather crude and limited. The only statutory provision is for the mandatory use of silencers on vehicle exhaust pipes. There is no control on mechanical noise generated by vehicle engines and there are no noise levels defined. In the absence of the above, there is a high probability that vehicles with inferior noise performance are being imported into Hong Kong.

Proposed Regulations and Vehicle Noise Standards

3. It is proposed that vehicle noise regulations be made under the Noise Control Ordinance. The regulations would cover most types of motor vehicles including motor-cycles, and would specify noise emission standards which newly imported vehicles would have to meet before they could be registered in Hong Kong.

4. World-wide vehicle noise standards can be split into three regions: Europe (European Economic Community (EEC)), Japan and the USA. It is recognised that other countries also have vehicle noise controls. However, the Hong Kong market has been dominated by Japanese and European vehicles, and it is therefore reasonable to apply the current EEC and Japanese standards. It follows that there would not be any significant economic implications for the local vehicle industry. In the event other noise standards are submitted for consideration, provisions will be made to enable the Authority to accept noise emission which are as, or more stringent than those stipulated in the proposed regulations.

5. For motor vehicles, the two sets of vehicle noise standards which the major vehicle manufacturers supplying vehicles to Hong Kong have observed are 70/157/EEC as amended by 84/424/EEC made by the Council of the European Communities, and Article 30, as last amended in 1989, of the Road Safety Regulations for Road Vehicles made by the Ministry of Transport of Japan.

6. For motor-cycles, the noise standards to be adopted are 78/1057/EEC as amended by 87/56/EEC made by the Council of the European Communities, and Article 30, as last amended in 1989, of the Road Safety Regulations for Road Vehicles made by the Ministry of Transport of Japan.

7. The proposed regulations would :

- (i) prescribe all types of motor vehicles (except for some minor categories such as motor tricycle and special purpose vehicles) as noisy products and specify vehicle noise emission standards; and
- (ii) establish a link between the NCO and the Road Traffic Ordinance (RTO) so that the Commissioner for Transport would ensure compliance with the specified noise standards before registering a newly imported vehicle.

Noise Reduction and Proposed Implementation

8. A reduction in traffic noise of around 4 decibels could be expected in 7 to 10 years after the implementation of the proposed vehicle noise regulations. It is planned to implement the proposed vehicle noise regulations in April 1995, so that they would come into force at the same time as the amended Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) Regulations.

Staffing Implications

9. There would be some small staffing implications associated with checking certificates of compliance at first registration of vehicles prior to their entry into service.

Consultation

10. The Motor Traders Association and major bus companies and manufacturers have been consulted on the proposed regulations and vehicle noise standards. Most of the manufacturers indicated full compliance of their vehicles with the proposed standards and saw no difficulties in having the proposed regulations in place in 1995. A few had reservations with regard to there perhaps being insufficient lead time for the redesign of vehicle components.

11. For motor-cycles, no representative trade body has been identified for consultation on the proposed noise standards. However, consultation with individual motor-cycle dealers/manufacturers is underway. No difficulties are expected as the relevant standards were put into effect in a number of other countries from 1989 onwards.

Public Reaction

12. As the introduction of the vehicle noise regulations will ensure that all vehicles meet modern standards and would prevent Hong Kong from becoming a "dumping ground" for noisy vehicles, the proposal should be welcome by the public.

Advice Sought

13. Members are requested to consider and advise whether the above proposal should be implemented.

Environmental Protection Department
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