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(ACE Paper 6/98)
for advice

Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) (Amendment) Regulation 1998

Purpose

This paper seeks Members' advice on the Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) (Amendment) Regulation at the Annex. The Amendment Regulation aims to prevent further new registration of diesel private cars and to introduce the latest Euro II emission standards to light duty diesel vehicles other than taxis.

Background

2 Members were consulted in September 1997 on the integrated motor vehicle emission control strategy which comprises the following elements:

- (a) clean alternative to diesel vehicles;
- (b) stringent vehicle emissions and fuel standards;
- (c) strengthened emission inspection;
- (d) strengthened enforcement against smoky vehicles; and
- (e) education and publicity.

3 As part of our strategy to reduce the number of diesel vehicles using the roads, we propose to introduce a set of stringent emission standards on private diesel cars, which will in practice preclude them from first registration. We expect that this measure will cut about 270 new diesel private cars from entering into Hong Kong each year.

4 As regards emission standards on diesel vehicles, we have since April 1997 implemented the latest Euro II emission standards on large diesel vehicles of four tonnes and above. However, the emission standards for small diesel vehicles are still based on the Euro I standards introduced in 1995. In October 1997, the European Union implemented the new "Euro II" emission standards on small diesel vehicles. We propose to upgrade the current emission standards for small diesel vehicles in line with these latest and most stringent practicable standards.

The Amendment Regulation

5 Schedule 4 of the Amendment Regulation replaces the current standard of 0.14g/km on particulate emissions for private diesel cars, which are based on Euro I standards, with the standard of 0.05g/km adopted in California. This standard is so stringent that at present only a few advanced models can meet. As none of the diesel private car models sold in Hong Kong meet this standard, this amendment would in practice prevent future registration of diesel private cars in the next two to three years. If California tightens this standard, we will follow suit.

6 Schedule 5 of the Amendment Regulation upgrades the current emission standards for diesel vehicles of four tonnes and below in line with the latest Euro II emissions standards. Compared to the Euro I standards in force now, these new standards will reduce emissions of respirable suspended particulates, and nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons from individual diesel vehicles by 55% and 38% respectively. Taxis are excluded from the current exercise because our intention is to replace the diesel taxi fleet with LPG vehicles as soon as practicable. A separate amendment regulation will be prepared to deal with the emission standards for taxis once the way forward is determined.

Consultation

7 The Motor Traders Association, the Hong Kong Automobile Association and the Hong Kong Hotel Association (whose members are main users of diesel private cars) have been consulted on these proposals and have not raised any objections. The Environmental Affairs Panel of the Provisional Legislative Council was consulted in September 1997 on the integrated motor vehicle emissions strategy which included these proposals.

Implementation Timetable

8 Subject to approval of the Amendment Regulation by the Provisional Legislative Council, the new emission standards for private diesel cars will be implemented on 1 April 1998. To allow sufficient lead time for vehicle suppliers to respond, we aim to implement the Euro II standards for light duty diesel vehicles on 1 October 1998.

Financial and Staffing Implications

9 The Amendment Regulation will be implemented through the existing type approval arrangements for vehicles for first registration. There are no additional financial or staffing implications.

Economic Implications

10 The proposal to preclude private diesel cars from first registration will affect about 270 new registrations every year. Given the wide variations in the cost factors of using private cars and the small number of private diesel cars (which constitute only 1.3% of the private car fleet), the proposal should not give rise to any economic implications.

11 Tightening of the emission standards for light duty diesel vehicles in line with Euro II standards will not cause any significant increase in the costs of these vehicles.

Public Reaction

12 The public would welcome implementation of measures to abate air pollution from diesel vehicles through the adoption of the most stringent practicable emission standards. As the number of private diesel car owners is small and they always have the option of cleaner and more widely used petrol cars, strong objections to the proposal to prevent further registration of diesel private cars are not expected.

Advice Sought

13 Members are requested to endorse the Air Pollution Control (Vehicle Design Standards) (Emission) (Amendment) Regulation 1998 at the Annex to be made by the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands for introduction to the Provisional Legislative Council in February 1998.

Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau
January 1998