

CONTROLLING OFFICER'S REPLY

DEVB(W)095

(Question Serial No. 3063)

Head: (42) Electrical and Mechanical Services Department

Subhead (No. & title): Not Specified

Programme: (2) Mechanical Installations Safety

Controlling Officer: Director of Electrical and Mechanical Services (POON Kwok-ying)

Director of Bureau: Secretary for Development

Question:

Since 2007, the Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) has collaborated with many organisations to promote the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail”. In this connection, would the Government inform this Committee of the following:

- (1) the number of escalator incidents in each of the past 3 years, with a breakdown by the main causes of the incidents;
- (2) the methods, collaborating organisations and expenditure involved in promoting the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail” by the EMSD in the past 3 years;
- (3) whether any study has been conducted in Hong Kong to evaluate if the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail” can increase the handling capacity of escalators and make users safer; if yes, the details; if no, the reasons;
- (4) whether any assessment has been conducted on the effectiveness of promoting the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail” by the EMSD over the years; if yes, the results; if no, the reasons; and
- (5) the future plan to strengthen the promotion of the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail”?

Asked by: Hon LAI Tung-kwok (LegCo internal reference no.: 38)

Reply:

The Electrical and Mechanical Services Department (EMSD) has been enhancing the safety level of lifts and escalators through multi-pronged measures, of which public education and publicity campaigns are an integral part. Moreover, passengers' safe use of lifts and escalators is one of our priority considerations. As far as escalators are concerned, in order to ensure their safe use and avoid incidents, apart from proper maintenance and periodic examination, passengers' proper use of escalators is also important. Therefore, the EMSD

has always been committed to publicising and promoting the right attitude of passengers when using escalators, including standing firm, holding the handrail and not walking on the escalator, etc.

Our reply to the Honourable Member's question is as follows:

- (1) At present, there are about 10 900 escalators in Hong Kong. In the past 3 years, the numbers of escalator incidents reported to the EMSD in accordance with the Lifts and Escalators Ordinance (Cap. 618) are tabulated below:

Year	2022 ^{Note 3}	2023	2024
Incidents caused by human factors ^{Note 1}	1 705	2 627	2 698
Incidents caused by other factors ^{Note 2}	134	138	111
Total	1 839	2 765	2 809

Note 1: For example, passengers fell down due to loss of balance when walking on the escalator.

Note 2: For example, incidents caused by external factors, such as foreign objects being wedged in the space between the step and combplate, or equipment fault, or those occurred when works were being carried out.

Note 3: Due to the influence of the COVID-19 epidemic, the people flow reduced significantly and hence there were fewer passengers using escalators.

- (2) As mentioned above, the EMSD has been dedicated to the publicity and promotion of the right attitude of passengers when using escalators, including standing firm, holding the handrail and not walking on the escalator, etc. In the past 3 years, the EMSD disseminated relevant publicity materials through different channels to enrich the public's knowledge about the safe use of escalators. These channels included mass media (including television, radio broadcasts and social media, etc.) and the departmental newsletter. Meanwhile, the EMSD has been collaborating closely with the MTR Corporation Limited (MTRCL), the Hong Kong Housing Authority, as well as the property management industry, to jointly promote the message of using escalators safely. In addition, the EMSD from time to time conducted outreach activities in schools and elderly centres to provide information on the safe use of escalators to students and the elderly.

As the above public education and publicity campaigns are carried out by officers of different divisions of the EMSD, who also undertake other duties, their payroll cost has been subsumed under the daily operating costs of the EMSD. Therefore, we do not have the breakdown of the manpower and expenditure on this area of work.

- (3) to (5)

In Hong Kong, escalators shall comply with the technical and safety requirements in the Code of Practice on the Design and Construction of Lifts and Escalators, under which the designed handling capacity of an escalator is calculated based on the safe operational speed of the escalator with passengers standing on all steps. Therefore, passengers

standing firm on all steps and holding the handrail when using the escalator will not increase the designed handling capacity of the escalator. Meanwhile, leaving one side of the escalator for passengers who do not follow the safety guideline to walk on it will not only pose safety risks to other passengers, but also result in the reduction of the handling capacity of the escalator, probably causing longer waiting time for using the escalator during peak hours. It is worth mentioning that as the steps of an escalator are higher than those of a normal staircase and the height of the escalator steps varies during operation, passengers walking on the escalator may result in tripping incidents and affect other passengers on the escalator.

Owing to the drawbacks of passengers walking on the escalator, the EMSD has been encouraging the public to hold the handrail tightly and stand firm on either side of the steps when riding an escalator. In fact, the EMSD has made reference to the practices of a number of Mainland and overseas cities, including Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, Guangzhou, Taipei, Tokyo, Seoul, Melbourne, Singapore and Toronto. The governments of all of these cities encourage passengers to stand firm and hold the handrail when using escalators, in order to ensure safety.

In promoting the practice of “standing firm and holding the handrail”, the EMSD has been working closely with the MTRCL to enhance escalator safety at stations, including using different publicity approaches to raise public awareness of the safe use of escalators. In November 2024, the MTRCL launched a new round of campaign with a promotional video and posters, reminding passengers to hold the handrail and stand firm on either side of the escalator. The MTRCL has also deployed “escalator safety ambassadors” at specific stations to remind passengers of the safe use of escalators, including using lifts when travelling with bulky items or pushchairs as well as using wheelchairs. As these new measures have only been implemented for a short period of time, the EMSD will closely monitor their execution and will review their effectiveness in conjunction with the MTRCL in due course. Meanwhile, the EMSD will continue to conduct in-depth analyses with the MTRCL on the causes of escalator incidents in stations, with a view to implementing more effective improvement measures.

In future, the EMSD will incorporate into various publicity campaigns innovation and technology, such as interactive virtual reality technology, to educate the public on the safe use of escalators in a more vivid and interesting way, and in turn enhance the effectiveness of the campaigns.

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