



香港聲學學會 The Hong Kong Institute of Acoustics

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Prof. K.M. Li

The design and installation of roadside noise barriers has become a very hot topic in recent days following the controversial arrangement adopted by the Government in the installation and subsequent demolition of the barriers along the Tolo Highway. Questions on installation and maintenance costs, safety, insulation effectiveness and appearance are being raised and environmental and acoustical engineers together with Government officers are now under pressure to carry out review on the issue.

I was invited by Cable TV, as Chairman of the Institute, to appear on his programme on 11 February 2003 to express opinion on issues related to roadside noise barriers. The intention was to bring professional advice to the general public so that people could have more relevant information to carry out sensible discussion.

Shortly following the interview on TV, a consolidated article with views from various committee members was prepared and released to the press so as to elaborate on the technical aspects and to clarify misunderstandings that appeared from the prevailing discussions.

To arouse members' interest and to stimulate further discussion and cross fertilisation, the press release has been included in the Elite Club for information. It is hoped that as professionals, members can actively participate and express their expert knowledge for the well being of the profession and society.

ELITE CLUB 精英會

DESIGN OF ROADSIDE BARRIERS

(Press Release: 12 February 2003)

Prof. K.M. Li, Chairman

In the past months, the issue of barriers along Tolo Highway has been the focus of discussions among the Legislators, the members of public and the media. However, there appears to be some misunderstandings on the technical aspect involved. For the benefit of the public, the Hong Kong Institute of Acoustics would like to elaborate the following technical aspects.

1. The traffic noise problem in Hong Kong is very serious. According to EPD, some 1 million people in HK are exposed to high traffic noise level [i.e. higher than 70 dB(A) L10(1h)]. It should be noted that this traffic noise standard is very lax as compared with other countries like Japan, Australia, Germany and the Netherlands (see chart 1 which is extracted from the website of Advisory Council on the Environment, The Hong Kong SAR Government).

Chart 1 -
Comparison of
traffic noise criteria



2. Erecting noise barriers to reduce traffic noise is a common practice adopted worldwide. This is not a new technology. The basic principle is to prevent traffic noise from reaching the neighbourhood communities by providing a shielding screen between highways and residential apartments. Because of typical features in Hong Kong (high-rise residential buildings at short distances from highways), relative high barriers are needed for a meaningful noise reduction.



Figure 1 - A barrier in Korea.

3. Some members of the community comment that barriers in Hong Kong are very massive. We share the same concern. However, we believe that our noise barrier systems need to be rigid, durable and able to withstand typhoon conditions. It is worthy to compare practices in other Asian cities such as Korea, Taiwan and Japan where they

The articles include the opinions of the authors and they do not represent the views of the Institute.

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