

# City Talk



The bus accident on June 4 last year that saw 25 people injured in Sha Tin.

## SAFE COMMUTES ARE A TWO-WAY TRAFFIC

A school bus driver who caused a collision with other motor vehicles that injured more than 25 people was last week convicted of dangerous driving and imprisoned for five months.

This serves to remind us of the vital importance of public safety in transport.

With some 90 percent of commuters using public transport, most of us depend on transport operators, or individual drivers, to provide a high standard of safety.

As a rule of thumb, the larger the carrier of passengers, the safer the system should be.

In statistical terms, taxis have a relatively high number of accidents than minibuses, followed by buses.

Trams, light rail and our Mass Transit Railway system have progressively fewer accidents per number of passengers. This is appropriate as their operators have paid a lot of attention to the systems that go toward ensuring accident numbers are as low as possible.

That involves responsible checks of designs of systems and equipment to ensure they achieve the highest level of safety and training for drivers and maintenance technicians to regard passenger safety as their highest priority.

A lot of effort has also been put into inculcating a culture of safety and safe behavior among passengers.

With these efforts, most system- or driver-induced incidents have been eliminated and accidents in public transport are now largely due to passenger carelessness rather than the drivers or the system.

For buses and trams, one of the more common incidents is tripping or falling while coming down the stairs.

With the use of safety belts being compulsory, most injuries occur when people are alighting or going to and from upper floors.

Accidents can occur when there is interaction between humans and machines.



### Nuts and bolts

Edmund Leung

The risks increase when vehicles are in motion and passengers are standing or moving.

The most common injury on railways are from slipping or tripping on platforms, concourses or stairways.

Fortunately, accidents of these types are mainly of a minor nature.

More serious injuries could result from falling on escalators.

Passengers running up or down escalators could easily fall.

Toting an excessively large or heavy baggage item could upset a person's balance, and in extreme cases, overload an escalator, leading to a failure or an emergency stop.

Other accidents could be due to passengers losing attention due to their use of phones while in motion, rushing to board trains before doors close and children playing while on escalators.

Some children's tendency to rub shoes against the edge of the escalator steps could lead to jamming, knocking the child off balance and causing falls.

There are also isolated cases where foreign objects fall onto escalator steps causing them to jam and stop abruptly.

Once that happens, the inattentive could fall if they fail to support themselves with their hands on the handrails.

In most of these cases, some care and attention on the part of passengers can prevent accidents.

Accidents are avoidable, but both transport operators and passengers play vital roles in achieving this aim.

Equipment and systems are designed and tested to be safe, but to achieve a high level of safety, the human factor remains the variable element.

**Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over features of modern life**