

Accidents cost Urbco \$500,000

Nick Squires

Nearly half a million dollars in compensation has been paid out by the Urban Council because of traffic accidents involving its drivers so far this year.

The council paid accident victims \$431,354 in compensation between January and September, compared to \$530,000 for the whole of 1993.

Paul Young, the chairman of the administration select committee, told the council's monthly meeting that the figures did not suggest that payments this year were higher than average.

In reply to a question from a councillor, Li Wah-ming, about the safety record of council drivers, he said the amount of compensation paid out in a particular period did not relate to the number of accidents, as cases took time to be investigated and taken to court.

Young denied that the standard of the council's drivers, who operate refuse collection trucks, street cleaning vehicles, chauffeur-driven saloon cars and staff vans, was deteriorating.

He said drivers' safety records were measured by the average number of kilometres they drove per traffic accident.

The figures for the past five quarters, from April 1993 to June 1994, showed a slight im-

provement in the accident rate, from 39,760 to 42,740 kilometres per accident.

Young said the average kilometre per accident rate for all government vehicles in 1993 was 40,850, compared with the slightly better 42,528 for the Urban Services Department.

Drivers involved in accidents were disciplined, he said, regardless of whether the accident led to the payment of compensation.

They were either given a verbal or written warning, or subjected to formal disciplinary action.

He said statistics showed that the latest number of accidents, for April to June this year, was "not particularly serious".

During that period there were 51 accidents, compared with 56 in the same quarter in 1993.

Young denied that any of the accidents were caused by drivers who held second jobs being too tired to concentrate properly.

He told the council that 43 drivers had official approval to take part-time work, and that none of them had been involved in accidents this year.

He said it was "difficult" for the council to know whether other drivers were working in their spare time if they did not seek official permission.