

DH conducts interdepartmental enforcement operation "Thunder" against distribution of smoking product advertisements in public housing estates (with photos)

â€œTo step up enforcement actions against distribution of illicit cigarette leaflets in public housing estates, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) and the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) launched a joint operation codenamed "Thunder" in various districts across Hong Kong between September 19 and October 6. TACO is following up on the investigation of three cases of distributing smoking product leaflets in Mun Tung Estate in Tung Chung, Long Shin Estate in Yuen Long and Upper Ngau Tau Kok Estate in Kwun Tong respectively, where over 1 700 pieces of illicit cigarette leaflets were seized. The three persons concerned were aged 23, 48 and 57. In accordance with the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) (the Ordinance), no person shall distribute any smoking product advertisement (including any promotion leaflets). Any person who contravenes the regulation is liable to a maximum fine of \$50,000.

TACO, together with the C&ED, have carried out 18 joint operations under this round of "Thunder" until today, during which a total of 31 public housing estates in various districts across Hong Kong have been inspected. In addition, TACO, the Police and the Housing Department have established a co-operation mechanism targeting the distribution of smoking product leaflets in public housing estates. When any smoking product leaflet distribution is detected at public housing estates, the housing estate staff will contact the Police for assistance and subsequently refer the case to TACO for further investigation. TACO will continue to carry out relevant interdepartmental operations, and follow up and investigate every complaint regarding the distribution of smoking product advertisements, as well as to refer any suspected cases of illicit cigarettes that involve violations of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) to the relevant department for further investigation.

A spokesman for the DH stressed that the department has long been closely monitoring and taking stringent enforcement actions against violations of the Ordinance (including the distribution of smoking product advertisements). The spokesman reiterated that all tobacco products, regardless of whether they are duty paid or not, pose significant health risks. Smokers should quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from www.livetobaccofree.hk.

