

[DH continues interdepartmental operation against distribution of smoking product advertisements in public housing estates \(with photos\)](#)

â€œTo step up enforcement actions to combat the distribution of smoking product leaflets in public housing estates, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) today (February 28) continued to carry out a joint operation with the Police and the Housing Department (HD) at two public housing estates in Sham Shui Po District to conduct inspections and carry out publicity. In addition to patrolling at the estates, officers from TACO provided estate security personnel and residents with information on what to do when a suspected violation is found. Three members of the Sham Shui Po District Council also joined today's operation and reminded the residents not to defy the law.

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. In 2023, TACO received about 21 130 complaints related to the Ordinance, including about 1 070 complaints (accounting for approximately 5 per cent of the total) involving the distribution of smoking product advertisements. 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 refer any suspected cases of illicit cigarettes that involve violations of the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance (Cap. 109) to the relevant department for further investigation.

Since January this year, TACO has already carried out joint operations with the Police and the HD in a total of 29 housing estates in various districts across Hong Kong. Another four joint operations have also been conducted with the Customs and Excise Department in February to combat the sale of illicit cigarettes and related promotional activities at public housing estates. Additionally, TACO, the Police and the HD have established a co-operation mechanism targeting the distribution of smoking product leaflets at 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. Since 2021, TACO has successfully prosecuted 12 offenders (involved in 13 cases) for distributing smoking product leaflets. The highest penalty for these convicted cases was a fine of \$8,000.

A spokesman for the DH stressed that the department has always 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.

