

DH to enforce new legislation on alternative smoking products starting this Saturday

The Department of Health (DH) today (April 28) reminded members of the public, incoming travellers and traders that the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the DH will start carrying out new enforcement measures subsequent to the operation of the Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 this Saturday (April 30).

The Ordinance prohibits the import, promotion, manufacture, sale and possession for commercial purposes of alternative smoking products (ASPs). Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

"The ban covers electronic smoking products, heated tobacco products, herbal cigarettes, and their accessories. Starting this Saturday, Tobacco and Alcohol Control Inspectors will conduct inspections, investigate complaints and carry out enforcement actions accordingly," a spokesman for the DH said.

According to the Ordinance, import of an ASP by way of parcels, cargoes or bringing in by incoming travellers is prohibited. Articles carried by persons in transit at Hong Kong International Airport without passing through immigration control, air transshipment cargoes or articles staying on an aircraft or in a vessel during transit are exempted. Travellers bringing ASPs into Hong Kong, regardless of the quantity or whether they are for personal use, must declare them to the Customs and Excise Department.

Under the Ordinance, no person may smoke or carry an activated ASP in a statutory no smoking area. Offenders will be issued with a \$1,500 fixed penalty notice.

The TACO has developed a set of frequently asked questions, a pamphlet and other materials to assist the public, incoming travellers and traders in complying with the legislative requirements. Members of the public, incoming travellers and traders can visit the TACO website (www.taco.gov.hk) to learn more about the provisions of the new legislation.

The spokesman also cautioned against the use of any ASPs and stressed that these products contain amounts of nicotine similar to those of conventional cigarettes in order to sustain addiction. In addition, health hazards of long-term exposure to these new products are unknown.

"We appeal to smokers to quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. They are encouraged to call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183. The hotline is operated by registered nurses, providing professional counselling services on smoking cessation," the spokesman said. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained

from www.livetobaccofree.hk.

The spokesman remarked that today is World Day for Safety and Health at Work. He reminded that ASPs, like conventional cigarettes, release harmful secondhand smoke and urged members of the public to refrain from using any smoking products at workplaces.