

## DH's operation "Thunderstone" against illegal sale of alternative smoking products (with photos)

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office (TACO) of the Department of Health (DH) conducted an operation codenamed "Thunderstone" yesterday (September 11) against the illegal sale of alternative smoking products (ASPs). A heated tobacco device and a batch of 400 suspected ASPs were seized during the operation.

Through in-depth investigations, officers of the TACO yesterday conducted an operation by posing as customers to contact people suspected of selling ASPs illegally. In the operation, a heated tobacco device and a batch of 400 suspected ASPs were seized. Officers initiated an investigation against a 28-year-old man for suspecting of selling ASPs and possessing ASPs for commercial purposes. Charges will be laid against offender(s) when sufficient evidence is found.

The Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) prohibits the promotion, manufacture, sale and possession for commercial purposes of ASPs. Offenders are subject to a maximum fine of \$50,000 and imprisonment for six months.

A spokesman for the DH said that the department will continue to take stringent enforcement action. 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. The Government appeals 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 and provides professional counselling services on smoking cessation. Information on smoking cessation can also be obtained from [www.livetobaccofree.hk](http://www.livetobaccofree.hk).

