

DH's Tobacco Control Office strengthens tobacco enforcement work (with photos)

The Department of Health's Tobacco Control Office (TCO) today (June 26) carried out a tobacco control publicity operation, reminding members of the public to comply with the law and not to smoke in statutory no-smoking areas. Venue managers are also urged to implement the smoking ban in indoor public areas to safeguard the health of their staff and customers.

The TCO set up a task force with retired police officers in December 2017 to strengthen enforcement actions, especially during night-time or public holidays and in venues where smoking offences are prevalent. During the World Cup period, the TCO has also stepped up its enforcement actions against smoking offences in venues such as pubs and cooked food centres.

A spokesman for the TCO said, "With their professional training as well as rich knowledge and experience in enforcement work, retired police officers can fit in well with the work of tobacco control inspectors. They can apply their enforcement experience in tobacco control work, enhancing the overall enforcement capability of the tobacco control inspector team."

The enforcement work of the task force has been effective. From its establishment to May this year, the task force has inspected over 3,300 venues and prosecuted over 1,300 smoking offenders.

The spokesman pointed out that enforcement is an integral part of the Government's tobacco control policy. According to the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap 371), no person shall smoke or carry a lighted cigarette, cigar or pipe in a statutory no-smoking area. Offenders will be liable to a fixed penalty of \$1,500. Statutory no-smoking areas include indoor areas of all restaurant premises, indoor workplaces, indoor areas in public places and some outdoor venues.

In 2017, the TCO conducted 33,000 inspections and issued fixed penalty notices or summonses to over 9,800 smoking offenders.

When members of the public are found smoking in statutory no-smoking areas, tobacco control inspectors will prosecute offenders without prior warning. Smoking offenders are urged to co-operate with the enforcement officers to provide identity documents and other necessary information, or they might be further charged with failing to give their name, address and contact telephone number or produce proof of identity upon request, for which offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$10,000.

The spokesman reminded, "The venue manager of a statutory no-smoking area is empowered by the law to implement the smoking ban. As smoking is an

action that lasts for a very short time, it is more effective for a venue manager to take action against a smoking offence. If smoking offenders are found in no-smoking areas, members of the public can make a complaint to the venue manager to implement the smoking ban."

The public can also call 2961 8823 or 1823 to make a complaint to the TCO. The TCO will investigate the cases and conduct inspections for enforcement.

