

EPD successfully intercepts three cases of illegal import of contaminated aluminium scrap by sea (with photos)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) successfully intercepted earlier three cases of illegally imported contaminated aluminium scrap from Chile, the United States and Canada at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals. The three importers involved, namely Honest Tallent International Industrial Limited, Easterly Trading Company Limited and Come Star Corporation Century Limited, were convicted and fined a total of \$45,500 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (February 8), January 4 of this year and November 30 of last year respectively for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

In June to August 2021, EPD enforcement officers, with the assistance of the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED), intercepted 36 sea containers at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals that were claimed to contain aluminium waste and scrap, metal scrap and recycled cast aluminium alloy material, and found a total of about 840 tonnes of contaminated aluminium scrap with a large amount of waste wire, waste sponge, waste paper, waste wood, waste plastics and other waste. The amount of impurities contained therein far exceeded the national standards. The EPD immediately repatriated all the intercepted contaminated aluminium scrap to the places of origin and notified the local enforcement authorities concerned about the return shipments for their follow-up. The EPD also instituted prosecutions against the three importers involved under the WDO.

An EPD spokesman said that in response to a notable rise in import volume of metal recyclables last year, the EPD and the C&ED had enhanced the inspection of suspicious aluminium recyclables containers based on risk assessment, and had successfully intercepted the contaminated aluminium scrap involved. The batch of contaminated aluminium scrap did not comply with the regulation and was mixed with a large amount of impurities that could not be recycled. If this contaminated aluminium scrap had been imported into Hong Kong, the impurities contained therein would have eventually been delivered to landfills for disposal, taking up limited landfill space in Hong Kong. Improper handling of such impurities would also pollute the environment and cause harm to public health. The EPD will continue to enhance the intelligence exchange and risk analysis with overseas law enforcement agencies and work with the C&ED to inspect suspicious containers to combat such illegal import activities involving contaminated metal recyclables.

The spokesman reminded importers and exporters of the waste recycling trade not to illegally import (including import into or transshipment through Hong Kong) or export contaminated aluminium scrap or other controlled waste. According to the WDO, first-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are

liable to a fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

The EPD has issued guidelines on the import and export control on metal recyclables for the reference of members of the public and the waste recycling trade. The guidelines can be downloaded from the EPD's website: www.epd.gov.hk/epd/sites/default/files/epd/english/environmentinhk/waste/guide_ref/files/General%20Guidelines%20on%20Import%20and%20Export%20of%20Recyclables_Eng.pdf.

