

# Five persons arrested for suspected illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons and sale of alternative smoking products

The Department of Health (DH) and the Police yesterday (May 24) conducted a joint operation against the illegal sale of alternative smoking products (ASPs). During the operation, three men and two women, aged 21 to 24, were arrested by the Police. The five persons were suspected of illegal sale and possession of Part 1 poisons as well as the illegal sale of ASPs.

The Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office and the Drug Office of the DH, with the Police, yesterday conducted an operation against two premises in Yuen Long suspected of selling ASPs. During the operation, a batch of suspected ASPs, including about 900 electronic smoking devices and 5 900 boxes of suspected nicotine-containing electronic cigarette cartridges, were seized. An investigation is continuing.

The Smoking (Public Health) (Amendment) Ordinance 2021 (Cap. 371) came into operation on April 30. The Ordinance prohibits the import, 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. In addition, according to the Pharmacy and Poisons Regulations (Cap. 138A), nicotine (except tobacco) is listed as a Part 1 poison and electronic cigarettes containing nicotine are regarded as pharmaceutical products. The Pharmacy and Poisons Ordinance (Cap. 138) also stipulates that all pharmaceutical products must be registered with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Hong Kong before they can be legally sold in the market. Illegal sale or possession of unregistered pharmaceutical products or Part 1 poisons are criminal offences. The maximum penalty for each offence is a fine of \$100,000 and two years' imprisonment.

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).