

Four pharmacies and one trading company plus three directors convicted of supplying disinfectant alcohol with false descriptions of composition

Four pharmacies and the directors of two pharmacies as well as a trading company and its director were convicted and fined \$2,000 to \$28,000 on May 31 and today (June 21) at Fanling Magistrates' Courts for supplying disinfectant alcohol with false descriptions of composition and with no bilingual warnings or cautions, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the Consumer Goods Safety Regulation (CGSR), a subsidiary legislation of the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance.

Hong Kong Customs received information in February last year alleging the sale of disinfectant alcohol with suspected false descriptions of composition at a pharmacy in Fanling. Customs officers later test-purchased the antibacterial disinfectant concerned labelled as containing "75% ethanol" and sent samples to the Government Laboratory for examination. Test results revealed that the ethanol content of the disinfectant was different from its product descriptions. The product information marked on the packages of the products also lacked warnings or cautions in the English language in respect of their safe keeping, use or consumption. The product was in contravention of the TDO and the CGSR respectively.

Customs reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and the CGSR. Consumers should also purchase disinfectant alcohol with recognised brands from reputable shops.

In view of the development of the COVID-19 epidemic, Customs has conducted a territory-wide operation codenamed "Guardian" since January 27 last year to conduct spot checks and enforcement operations on common protective items to ensure that those items sold in the market comply with relevant ordinances. The operation is ongoing and law enforcement action will be taken immediately if any suspected violations are detected.

Under the TDO, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the CGSR, where consumer goods or their packages are marked with warnings or cautions with respect to their safe keeping, use, consumption or disposal, such warnings or cautions shall be in both the English and Chinese languages. Any person who supplies consumer goods which do not comply with the requirements of bilingual warnings or cautions, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for

one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on subsequent convictions.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TD0 or the CGSR to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).