

Hong Kong Customs conducts large-scale territory-wide spot checks on surgical masks (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs launched a large-scale territory-wide special operation codenamed "Guardian" on January 27, with about 200 Customs officers mobilised to conduct spot checks and inspections in various districts on surgical masks available in the market regarding their compliance with the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO). As at today (January 29), inspections were conducted at over 180 retail spots selling surgical masks. The special operation is ongoing.

The spot check operation focused on three aspects of surgical masks, namely false origin claims, non-compliance with consumer goods safety standards and false trademarks. Up till now, Customs officers have inspected retail spots including chain stores, pharmacies, medicine stores and shops selling daily necessities. Apart from test purchases of surgical masks for safety tests, Customs has also contacted brand owners to assist in affirming the authenticity of the brands and origins. Customs also made test purchases on an Internet platform to inspect products' trade descriptions, safety and trademarks.

The "Guardian" operation is ongoing to ensure that the surgical masks being sold in the market comply with the TDO and the CGSO. Immediate announcements will be made if any irregularities are spotted during the operation.

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, or sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Under the CGSO, it is an offence to supply, manufacture or import into Hong Kong consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. 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 conviction.

Customs has all along attached great importance to public safety and consumer rights. Law enforcement action will be taken immediately if any violation of the TDO or the CGSO is detected.

Customs reminds traders not to sell products with false origins or false trademarks, or unsafe consumer goods. Members of the public should also make purchases in reputable shops.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TDO or

the CGSO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).

