

Hong Kong Customs discovers more disinfectant alcohol with suspected false claims (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs yesterday (May 27) arrested a director of a pharmacy suspected of supplying disinfectant alcohol with false claims on its ethanol content and net volume. Customs appeals to traders to remove the disinfectant alcohol from their shelves.

Customs earlier received information alleging the sale of disinfectant alcohol with a suspected false description on its composition at a pharmacy in Sha Tin. Customs officers were then deployed for immediate action to test-purchase a type of disinfectant alcohol labelled as containing 75 per cent ethanol in English from the pharmacy. Also labelled as 500 millilitres, the disinfectant alcohol was put on sale in transparent plastic bottles and sold at a price of \$28 per bottle.

Samples were sent to the Government Laboratory to establish its composition and safety. Test results revealed that the disinfectant alcohol consisted of 39 per cent ethanol, and its actual net volume was only 450 millilitres.

The ethanol content and the net volume of the disinfectant alcohol were different from the product descriptions according to the test results, suspected to be in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO).

Noting the test results, Customs yesterday conducted an immediate enforcement action and arrested a 36-year-old male director of the pharmacy.

Apart from the pharmacy, over 100 retail spots in various districts were also checked yesterday and no such product was found for sale.

An investigation is ongoing.

Customs reminds members of the public to observe the following safety tips when purchasing disinfectant alcohol:

- Pay attention to the product description shown on labels, including the manufacturing date and validity period;
- Avoid choosing a disinfectant alcohol with unknown sources and limited information; and
- Purchase products from recognised brands at reputable shops.

This operation is part of the "Guardian" operation, which has been running for over four months as of today (May 28) since its launch on January 27. More than 4 800 officers have been mobilised to conduct over 32 000 inspections at retail spots in various districts. The operation will continue.

Under the TD0, 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 Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO), it is an offence to import, manufacture or supply 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 a subsequent conviction.

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

