

Hong Kong Customs raids suspected illicit cigarette storage centre (with photo)

Hong Kong Customs on May 22 raided a suspected illicit cigarette storage centre in Fanling and seized about 1.1 million suspected illicit cigarettes with an estimated market value of about \$4.1 million and a duty potential of about \$2.8 million.

During an anti-illicit cigarette operation conducted in Fanling in that afternoon, Customs officers seized the batch of suspected illicit cigarettes inside a metal house in Ping Che Street. After a follow-up investigation, two men, aged 52 and 66, suspected to be connected with the case, were arrested yesterday (May 29). They were the tenants of the metal house.

An initial investigation revealed that the illicit cigarette storage centre involved in the case was mainly used to supply illicit cigarettes to residents in the North District.

â€‹

An investigation is ongoing. The two arrested men were released on bail for further investigation. Customs will continue to trace the source and flow of the illicit cigarettes. The likelihood of further arrests is not ruled out.

Customs will continue its risk assessment and intelligence analysis for interception at source as well as through its multi-pronged enforcement strategy targeting storage, distribution and peddling to spare no effort in combating illicit cigarette activities.

Customs reminds members of the public that it is an offence to buy or sell illicit cigarettes. Under the Dutiable Commodities Ordinance, anyone involved in dealing with, possession of, selling or buying illicit cigarettes commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$1 million and imprisonment for two years.

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

