

Importer convicted again for illegally importing electronic waste (with photos)

An importer, namely E8 Electronics Company Limited, was convicted and fined \$80,000 at Eastern Magistrates' Courts today (October 19) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO) as a result of illegally importing hazardous electronic waste from the United Kingdom for a third time. The company was convicted for offences of the same kind in November last year and in January this year.

A spokesman for the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) said that, in recent years, the department has been reinforcing its exchanges of intelligence and collaboration with the Customs and Excise Department and nearby countries and regions, as well as updating intelligence in a timely manner and conducting in-depth analyses of it. As a result, with targeted inspections of suspected shipments of imported and exported waste based on a risk-assessment approach, the effectiveness of enforcement has been enhanced.

In May this year, enforcement officers of the EPD once again conducted a targeted inspection of an air cargo shipment imported by the aforementioned importer through Hong Kong International Airport. They successfully intercepted a batch of illegally imported hazardous electronic waste, including around 2 600 waste mobile phone displays, 100 waste tablet displays and around 200 kilograms of waste batteries, while the air cargo was claimed to contain telecommunication equipment. The EPD immediately repatriated all the intercepted waste to the place of origin and notified the local enforcement authorities concerned about the return shipment for their follow-up. The EPD also instituted prosecution against the importer involved under the WDO.

The spokesman stressed that waste mobile phone displays, waste tablet displays and waste batteries are hazardous electronic waste containing various heavy metals and other toxic chemical substances. They are regulated under the WDO. Improper disposal of such waste will cause harm to the environment and public health. The EPD will continue to rigorously combat the illegal import and export of hazardous waste, bring offenders to justice and prevent Hong Kong from becoming a distribution hub for illegally imported and exported waste.

The spokesman reminded importers and exporters of the waste recycling trade not to illegally import (including transshipment through Hong Kong) or export hazardous waste. According to the WDO, it is an offence for anyone to import or export hazardous waste without obtaining a valid permit beforehand. First-time offenders are liable to a maximum fine of \$200,000 and six months' imprisonment. For subsequent offences, offenders are liable to a fine of \$500,000 and two years' imprisonment.

