

Importer in first case of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste by land convicted (with photos)

The Environmental Protection Department (EPD) and the Customs and Excise Department (C&ED) conducted a joint operation earlier and intercepted the first case of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste from the Mainland by land at Sha Tau Kok Control Point. The importer involved, namely Let's Go (International) Logistics Limited, was convicted and fined a total of \$30,000 at Fanling Magistrates' Courts today (March 18) for contravening the Waste Disposal Ordinance (WDO).

In June last year, enforcement officers inspected a truck, which was claimed to contain tablet casings, at Sha Tau Kok Control Point and intercepted a batch of illegally imported hazardous electronic waste, including over 20 000 waste batteries and a batch of waste flat panel displays. After completion of evidence gathering, the EPD immediately repatriated all the intercepted waste to the Mainland and instituted prosecution against the importer involved under the WDO. This is the first convicted case of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste by land, showing the effectiveness of the EPD's efforts to combat illegal imports of waste comprehensively.

A spokesman for the EPD said that to prevent Hong Kong from becoming a distribution hub for the illegal import of waste, the department has been closely exchanging intelligence and collaborating with the C&ED on strengthening the interception of waste entering Hong Kong illegally through different channels. Since the Mainland has gradually banned the import of various types of waste since 2018 and Hong Kong's import and export control on regulated electrical and electronic equipment came into effect, the EPD and the C&ED have continuously stepped up inspections of suspicious cargo transported to Hong Kong by sea and by air, and gradually extended the relevant enforcement work to all land control points in the second half of 2020. According to records, the EPD, with the assistance of the C&ED, successfully prosecuted 53 cases of illegal import of hazardous electronic waste in 2019 and 52 cases in 2020, achieving significant increases of 47 per cent and 44 per cent as compared to the 36 cases in 2018. The EPD believes that this first conviction will have a deterrent effect on the illegal import of hazardous electronic waste by land in the future.

The spokesman stressed that the EPD will continue to rigorously combat the illegal import and export of hazardous waste and bring offenders to justice. The spokesman also 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.

