

Owner and staff member of online electrical appliances retailer imprisoned for engaging in wrongly accepting payment

â€‹An owner and a staff member of an online electrical appliances retailer were convicted today (October 11) at the Kwun Tong Magistrates' Courts for engaging in wrongly accepting payment in the course of selling air conditioners, in contravention of the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO). Both were sentenced to 31 weeks' imprisonment.

Hong Kong Customs earlier received information alleging that an online electrical appliances retailer was suspected of engaging in unfair trade practices when selling air conditioners and installation services through a social media platform page.

After investigation, Customs found that the retailer sold 57 air conditioners, with deposits amounting to \$197,500 in total, to multiple customers through a social media platform page. Being well aware of its inability to procure and supply the air conditioners due to financial difficulties of its business, the retailer still accepted payments from the customers and eventually failed to provide the relevant products to them.

Customs welcomes the sentence as the custodial sentence has imposed a considerable deterrent effect, and will continue to combat unfair trade practices with a view to protecting consumer interests. Customs also reminds traders to comply with the requirements of the TDO and consumers to procure products at reputable shops.

Under the TDO, any trader commits an offence if at the time of acceptance of payment, the trader intends not to supply the product or intends to supply a materially different product, or there are no reasonable grounds for believing that the trader will be able to supply the product within a specified or reasonable period. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Members of the public may report any suspected violations of the TDO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk) or online form (eform.cefs.gov.hk/form/ced002/).