

Transitional period of Smoking (Public Health) (Prescribed Information) Order ends today

The Tobacco Control Office (TCO) of the Department of Health (DH) today (June 20) reminded the trade and the public that the packets or retail containers of all tobacco products for sale in Hong Kong should only carry the new form of health warnings as set out in the Smoking (Public Health) (Prescribed Information) Order from tomorrow (June 21).

Taking into account the recommendations of the World Health Organization and overseas experience, the Government amended the legal requirements of the health warnings on packets or retail containers of tobacco products in 2017. Major changes include:

- (1) The area of the graphic health warning is required to increase from 50 per cent to at least 85 per cent of two largest surfaces of the packet and of the retail container;
- (2) increasing the number of forms of health warning from six to 12; and
- (3) incorporating new health warning messages and the smoking cessation hotline number on packets or retail containers of tobacco products.

The Order came into operation on December 21, 2017, with a transitional period of six months, which ends today.

To assist the trade to understand the requirements and comply with the Order, the TCO has prepared and distributed a set of guidelines and a DVD with graphical files of the health warnings to the trade. In addition, the TCO issued letters in December 2017, March 2018 and May 2018 to remind stakeholders including retailers regarding the new requirements. The Government will monitor the implementation of the new health warning requirements of tobacco products in the market.

The DH appeals to smokers to quit smoking as early as possible for their own health and that of others. Smokers who intend to quit smoking can call the DH's Integrated Smoking Cessation Hotline on 1833 183. The hotline is operated by registered nurses, providing professional counselling services on smoking cessation. Cases will be referred to suitable community smoking cessation service providers for follow-up when necessary.