

Forty surgical mask samples test-purchased by Hong Kong Customs comply with requirements of Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance

Hong Kong Customs launched a large-scale territory-wide special operation codenamed "Guardian" on January 27 to conduct spot checks, test purchases and inspections in various districts on surgical masks available in the market. More than 80 samples have been test-purchased as at yesterday (February 16). The first batch of 20 samples have passed the tests on bacterial counts early this month, while the test results of the second batch of 20 samples also revealed compliance with the bacterial count standard.

Up till now, all of the 40 test-purchased surgical masks in two batches have passed the tests on bacterial counts and no violations of the Consumer Goods Safety Ordinance (CGSO) have yet been found.

Customs will continue to arrange safety tests for samples and the results will be announced as soon as possible.

The second batch of 20 samples was test-purchased from different retail spots in various districts, including chain stores, pharmacies, medicine stores and shops selling daily necessities. Of these samples, 15 were in proper packaging and five were in loose packaging. Among those 15 samples of surgical masks, most were packed in 50-piece packages, while others were packed in packages ranging from five to 30 pieces.

As at yesterday, the "Guardian" operation has been underway for 21 days, with over 13 000 inspections conducted at retail spots selling surgical masks. The operation will carry on to ensure that the surgical masks being sold in the market comply with the Trade Descriptions Ordinance (TDO) and the CGSO. Customs will continue to promptly issue update announcements if any irregularities are spotted.

Under the CGSO, it is an offence to import, manufacture or supply consumer goods unless the goods comply with the general safety requirements for consumer goods. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$100,000 and imprisonment for one year on first conviction, and \$500,000 and imprisonment for two years on a subsequent conviction.

Under the TDO, any person who supplies goods with a false trade description in the course of trade or business, or is in possession of any goods for sale with a false trade description, or sells or possesses for sale any goods with a forged trademark, commits an offence. The maximum penalty upon conviction is a fine of \$500,000 and imprisonment for five years.

Customs reiterates that the department has all along attached great

importance to public safety and consumer rights. Law enforcement action will be taken immediately if any violation of the CGSO or the TD0 is detected.

Customs reminds traders not to sell products with false origins or false trademarks, or unsafe consumer goods. Members of the public should also make purchases at reputable shops.

Members of the public may report any suspected violation of the TD0 or the CGSO to Customs' 24-hour hotline 2545 6182 or its dedicated crime-reporting email account (crimereport@customs.gov.hk).