衞生署控煙酒辦公室
Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office
Department of Health

Plain Packaging Requirements for Conventional Smoking Products General Guidelines

November 2026



The Guidelines are for reference purpose only and shall not be regarded as a legal document. All examples, images and diagrams illustrated in the Guidelines are intended for reference only.

Please refer to the original text of the law for exact legal requirements, and independent legal advice should be sought where appropriate.

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1. Purpose

The Government published in the Gazette three pieces of subsidiary legislation[1] on 11 September 2026, including establishing specific statutory requirements for the plain packaging of regulated smoking products and updating the health warnings on the packaging of all conventional smoking products in tandem, so as to reduce the attractiveness of the packaging, prevent smoking especially among young people, and increase willingness to quit smoking; and removing the requirement to print tar and nicotine yields on the packaging to prevent smokers from mistakenly believing that so-called "light" and "low-tar" products are less harmful. At the same time, the duty stamp system will also be implemented in tandem, enabling the public and law enforcement officers to more effectively distinguish between duty-paid cigarettes and "cheap-whites" in the market.

To facilitate public and tobacco industry to understand the plain packaging requirements, the Tobacco and Alcohol Control Office of the Department of Health has prepared the Guidelines for reference.

2. Brief overview

According to the relevant subsidiary legislation, all **cigarette packets, cigarette cartons** and **retail containers of specified cigars**[2] (means a cigar that, at its thickest spot, has a diameter of 10 mm or below; or the weight [excluding any mouthpiece] of which does not exceed 1.4 grams) must appear in a specific drab brown[3] colour as its main background. Further, a set of general requirements (including physical features and colours, as well as permitted marks) also applies across the board to the retail packaging of **regulated smoking products (i.e. cigarettes and specified cigars)**.

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[1] The Secretary for Health has: (i) made the Smoking (Public Health) (Packaging Requirements for Cigarettes and Specified Cigars) Order under section 18(2) of the Smoking (Public Health) Ordinance (Cap. 371) to prescribe the packaging requirements for two types of conventional smoking products (namely cigarettes and specified cigars); (ii) made the Smoking (Public Health) (Prescribed Information) (Amendment) Order 2026 under section 18(2) of Cap. 371 to prescribe the new forms of health warnings for conventional smoking products, and delete the provisions requiring the printing of tar and nicotine yields on the cigarette packets and retail containers of cigarettes; and (iii) made the "Tobacco Control Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2025 (Commencement) Notice 2026" under the "Tobacco Control Legislation (Amendment) Ordinance 2025" to appoint the provisions related to the packaging requirement and the duty stamp system to commence on 27 November 2026, 1 March 2027 and 1 December 2027 respectively.

[2] Commonly known as "little cigars".

[3] The colour is Pantone 448C.

3. Commencement date and transitional period

The measures prescribed by the three pieces of subsidiary legislation mentioned above, including the change to plain packaging, the updating of health warnings, the removal of tar and nicotine yields, and the affixing of duty stamps, will commence on 1 March 2027, with a nine-month transitional period before full implementation on 1 December 2027.

During the transitional period from 1 March 2027 to 30 November 2027, retailers may lawfully sell the following three categories of **cigarette packets**:

	Health Warning	**Tar and Nicotine Yields**	**Duty Stamp[4]**
Category 1: Original packaged cigarettes	**Old**-form health warning under Cap. 371B	**Displayed**	**Not affixed**
Category 2: Original packaged cigarettes with duty stamp	**Old**-form health warning under Cap. 371B	**Displayed**	**Affixed**
Category 3: Plain packaged cigarettes	**New**-form health warning under Cap. 371B	**Not displayed**	**Affixed**

After the transitional period, only Category 3 products may be lawfully sold locally.

For **cigarette cartons**, retailers may lawfully sell during the transitional period: (a) packaging bearing the **old**-form health warning under Cap. 371B and **displaying** tar and nicotine yields; or (b) packaging complying with the plain packaging requirements, bearing the **new**-form health warning under Cap. 371B and **not displaying** tar and nicotine yields. After the transitional period, only category (b) products may be lawfully sold locally.

For **specified cigars**, retailers may lawfully sell during the transitional period: (a) packaging bearing the **old**-form health warning under Cap. 371B; or (b) packaging complying with the plain packaging requirements and bearing the **new**-form health warning under Cap. 371B. After the transitional period, only category (b) products may be lawfully sold locally.

For conventional smoking products that are not regulated smoking products (including **cigars other than specified cigars, pipe tobacco and cigarette tobacco**), retailers may lawfully sell during the transitional period:

[4] For the requirements regarding the affixing of duty stamps, please refer to the practice guidelines issued by the Customs and Excise Department.

(a) packaging bearing the **old**-form health warning under Cap. 371B and was printed on, or affixed to, the relevant container before 1 March 2027; or (b) packaging bearing the **new**-form health warning under Cap. 371B. After the transitional period, only category (b) products may be lawfully sold locally.

During or after the transitional period, any person who sells, offers for sale or possesses for the purposes of sale any conventional smoking products of which the packet or retail container does not conform to all of the prescribed requirements, including the health warning requirements and, where applicable, the plain packaging requirements for regulated smoking products commits an offence and is liable on summary conviction to a fine at level 5, which is **HK$50,000**.

The nine-month transitional period is intended to allow the industry sufficient time to sell off stocks of cigarettes in original packaging, while introducing products complying with the new legislation as soon as possible. The Government reminds tobacco manufacturers, importers and exporters to switch to plain packaging as early as possible, so that the public and retailers can adapt to the new requirements.

4. Definitions

Specified feature

Any decorative ridge, etching, embossing, debossing, bulge or other irregularity of shape or texture, or any other embellishment

Examples

Embossing



Debossing



Bulge or other irregularity of shape or texture





Outer surfaces of retail packaging of regulated smoking products

Cigarette packets

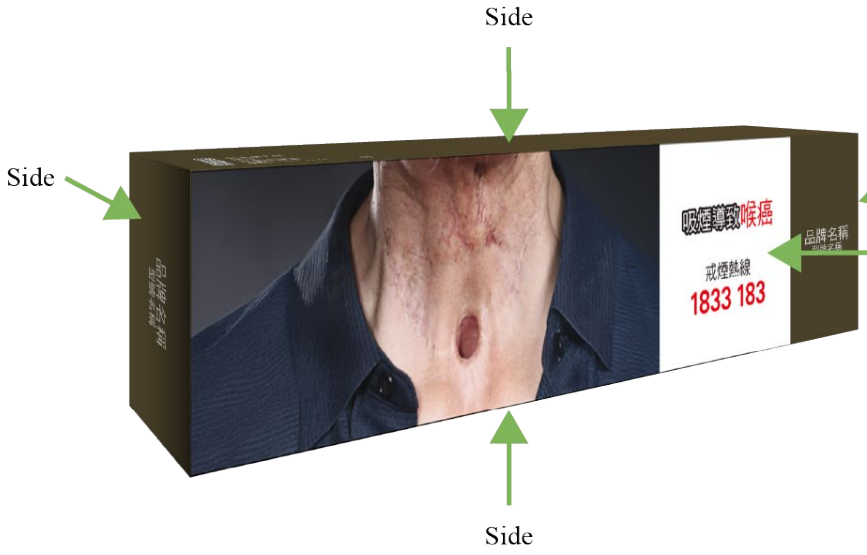


Front
(The Chinese version of the health warning appears on the front surface at which the flip-top lid is not hinged)



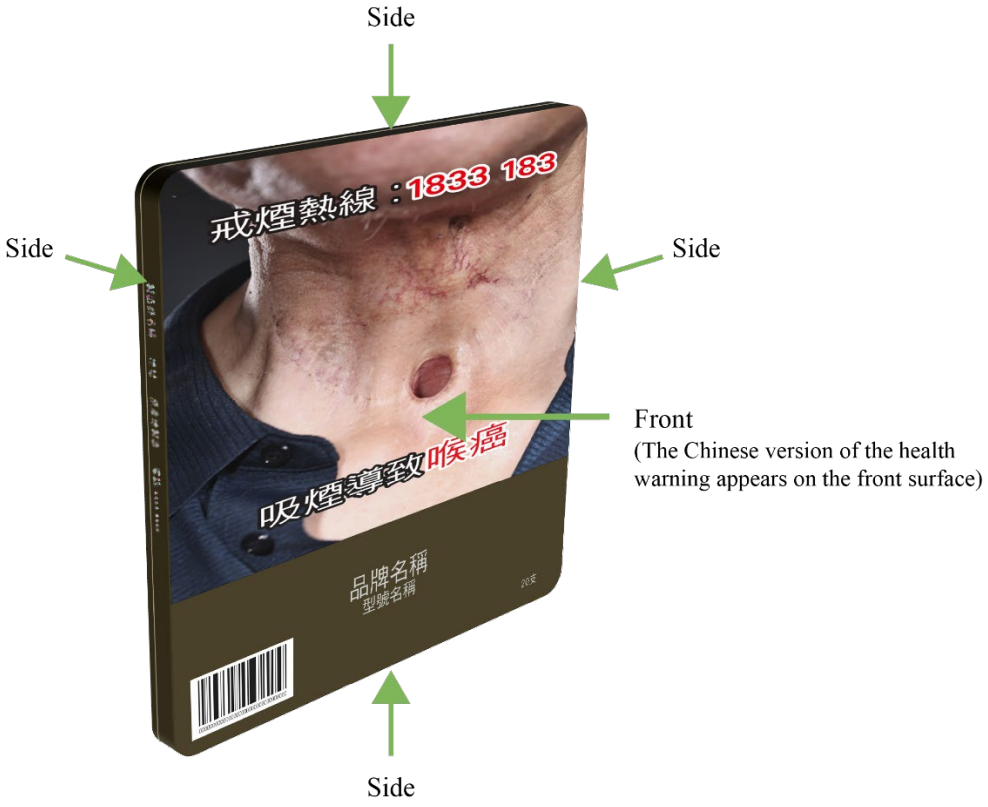
Back
(The English version of the health warning appears on the back surface at which the flip-top lid is hinged)

Cigarette cartons





Retail containers of specified cigars





5. General descriptions

(1) Pictorial health warnings and permitted marks on a retail container of specified cigars may be printed on an adhesive label attached firmly to the container

(2) How to determine "firmly": an adhesive label is one attached firmly to a retail packaging of a regulated smoking product or to a wrapper so as not to be easily removable if because of its robustness and adhesiveness it can stay, in the absence of intentional removal, so attached throughout the normal handling of the packaging or the wrapper

(3) Any glues or other adhesives applied on a retail packaging (including wrappers, linings and inserts) must be transparent and uncoloured

(4) A retail packaging (including wrappers, linings and inserts) must not include any of the following, except otherwise specified –

- cut-out areas or windows
- heat-activated inks
- inks or embellishments designed to appear or disappear gradually over time
- inks that appear fluorescent or change colour in certain light
- panels designed to be scratched or rubbed to reveal an image or text
- removable tabs
- fold-out or slide-out panels
- a sticker, adhesive label or any other thing adhering to, affixed to or covering wholly or partly the outer or inner surfaces
- make a sound that has the effect of promotion
- contain or produce a smell that has the effect of promotion
- contain spacers or fillers or any other thing except regulated smoking product
- specified feature (except inserts)

(5) Construction of cigarette packets and cartons

- All edges must be straight, and not be rounded or otherwise shaped or embellished in any way







(6) Construction of retail containers of specified cigars

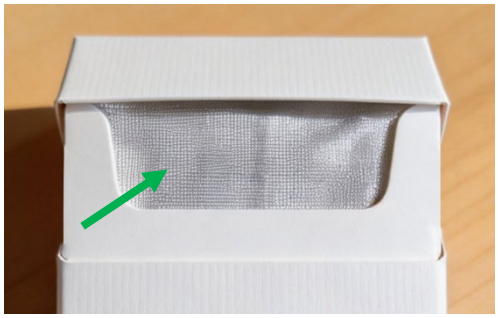
- No restrictions on packaging materials
- If made of cardboard, all edges must be straight, and not be rounded or otherwise shaped in any way
- If made of any material other than cardboard, may have one or more rounded edges, but must not have any edge that is bevelled or embellished; all adjacent surfaces must be perpendicular to each other





(7) Linings (cigarette packets and retail containers of specified cigars only)

- Must not be textured, except for texturing comprising small dots or squares embossed over the entire surface and the embossing is applied for the purpose of the automated manufacture; or placing the cigarette or cigar into the packet or container
- The embossing must not represent, or be suggestive of, the brand name or a variant name, or have the effect of promoting





(8) Inside lips (cigarette packets only)

- Must have straight edges (except that the corners may be rounded)
- The lip and all of its edges must not be embellished in any way





(9) Font height of brand names and variant names

- Brand names: up to 6 mm in height for every Chinese character, English letter or numeral
- Variant names: up to 4 mm in height for every Chinese character, English letter or numeral

For example, for brand name:



(10) Font height of other permitted marks

- Up to 3 mm in height for every Chinese character, English letter or numeral

6. Cigarette packets

Colour
- Outer: Pantone 448C; matte finish
- Inner: Pantone 448C or white; matte finish

Pictorial health warning
- Cover at least 85% of the 2 largest surfaces
- Chinese version must be printed on the front largest surface, placed above the brand name;
  English version must be printed on the back largest surface, positioned to meet the bottom edge



Wrapper
- Transparent and uncoloured
- May include 1 tear strip –
  - Transparent and uncoloured
  - A single continuous straight line of constant width (not exceeding 3 mm)
  - Must be parallel to the bottom edge of the flip top lid

Construction
- Made of cardboard
- Made up of 6 rectangular faces when closed
- A flip top lid must be hinged only at the back of the cigarette packet, have straight edges, and not be rounded or otherwise shaped or embellished in any way
- Dimensions –
  - Height: 85 mm – 125 mm
  - Width: 50 mm – 72 mm
  - Depth: 10 mm – 30 mm

6. Cigarette packets

Lining
- Made of only foil or paper or both
- Outer surface: silver (foil) or white (paper); matte finish
- Inner surface: white; matte finish
- Cannot be removed from the packet without damaging the lining

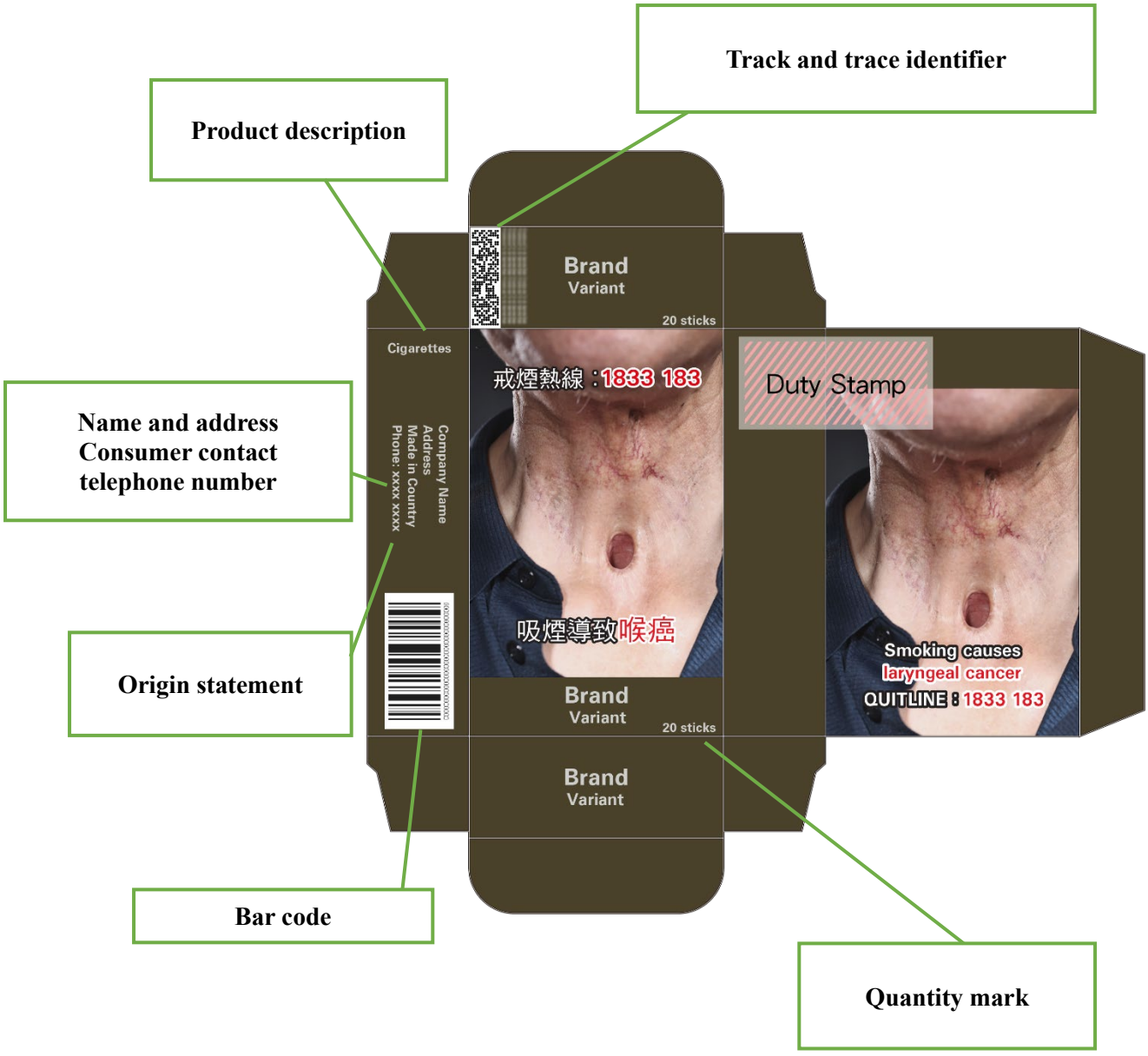
Inside lip



Variant name

Brand name

6. Cigarette packets



7. Cigarette cartons

Construction
- Made of cardboard
- Made up of 6 rectangular faces when closed
- May have 1 perforated strip

Pictorial health warning
- Cover at least 85% of the 2 largest surfaces
- Chinese version on one of the largest surfaces, English version on the other largest one

Brand name and variant name



Colour
- Outer: Pantone 448C; matte finish
- Inner: Pantone 448C or white; matte finish

Wrapper
- Transparent and uncoloured
- May include 1 tear strip –
  - Transparent and uncoloured
  - A single continuous straight line of constant width (not exceeding 3 mm)
  - Must be parallel to any straight edge of the carton

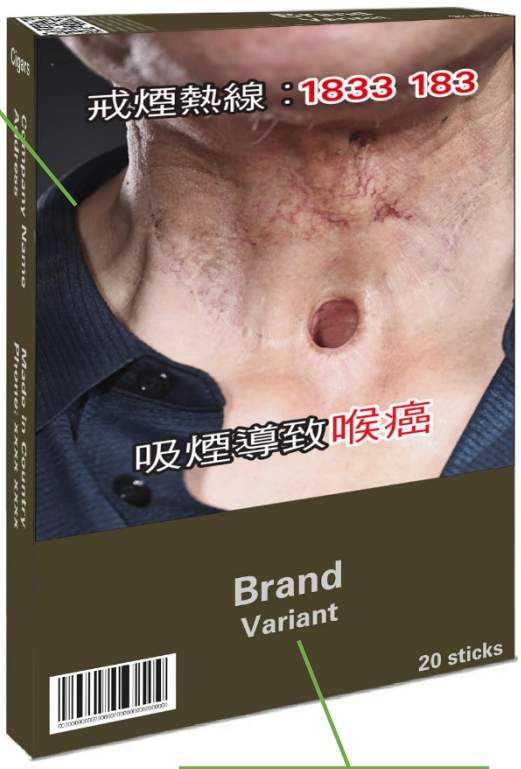
8. Retail containers of specified cigars

Pictorial health warning
- Chinese version: cover at least 70% of the front surface
- English version: cover 100% of the back surface

Colour
- Outer: Pantone 448C; matte finish
- If made of a material other than metal or wood, inner surfaces must in white or Pantone 448C; matte finish
- If made of metal or wood, inner surfaces must be in white; Pantone 448C; or the colour of the metal or wood

Lining
- Requirements same as those for a cigarette packet

Wrapper
- Requirements same as those for a cigarette packet, except that a tear strip on a wrapper for a specified cigar container must be parallel to any straight edge of the container



Brand name and variant name

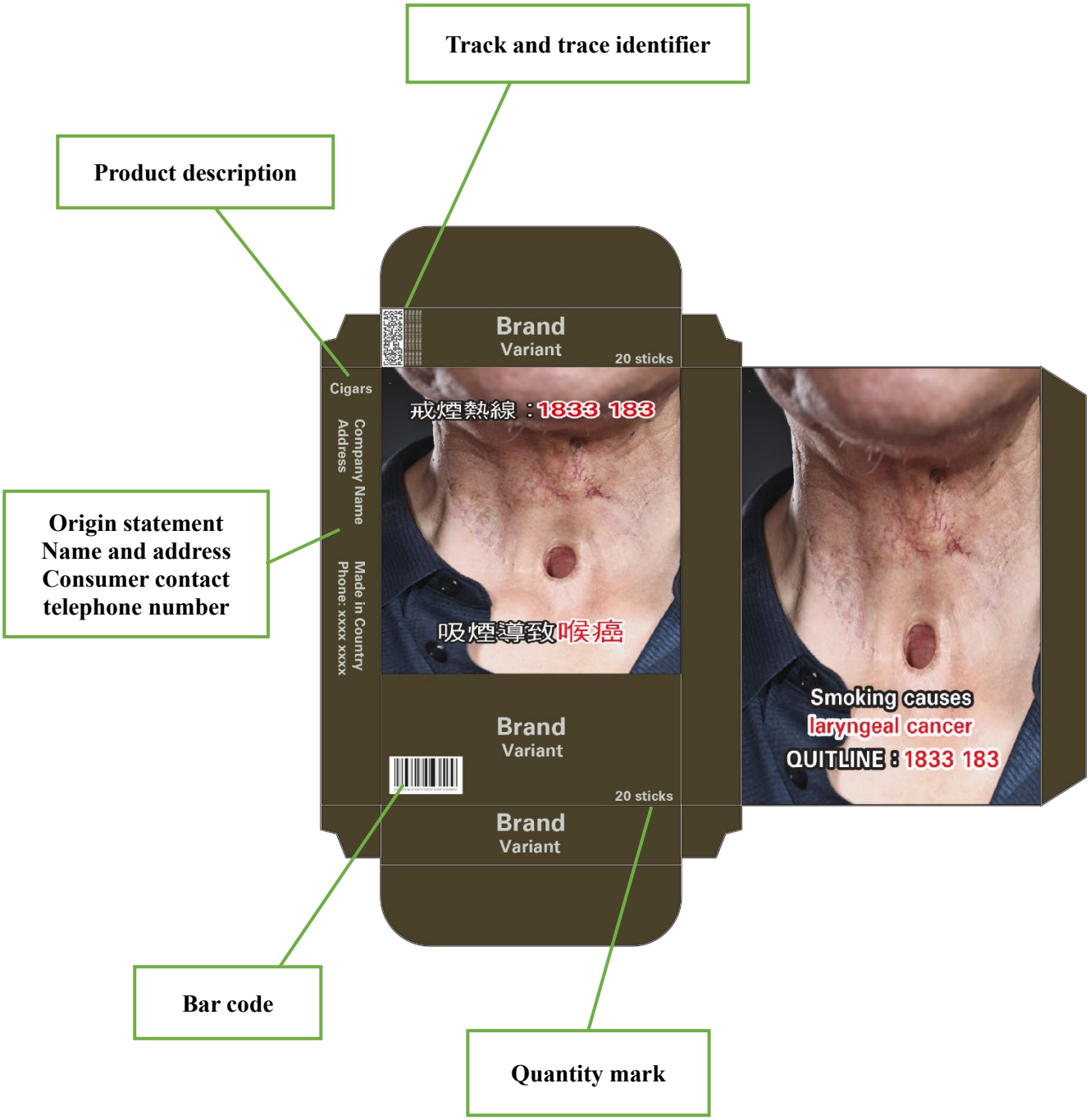


Construction
- Dimensions –
  - The largest dimension: at least 85 mm
  - The second largest dimension: at least 50 mm
- If made of cardboard, made up of 6 rectangular faces when closed

Resealing device
- Transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C
- Not be marked, textured or embellished in any way
- No larger than is reasonably necessary for its purpose
- Not obscure any health warning

Insert
- For the purpose of avoiding damage to the cigar during transportation or storage, may include one or more inserts
- Transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C
- Not display any mark, text or other embellishment

8. Retail containers of specified cigars



9. Permitted marks

The following permitted marks may appear on the retail packaging if the requirements prescribed are complied with, provided that the marks must not obscure any duty stamp or health warning. Unless otherwise specified, no specified feature may be used or included.

<table>
<tr><th>Permitted marks</th><th>Cigarette packets</th><th>Cigarette cartons</th><th>Retail container of specified cigar</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Origin marks</td><td colspan="3">• An alphanumeric code; or a covert mark
• May be applied on a retail packaging or a wrapper by printing, etching or debossing
• For an alphanumeric code,
o Appear once on a retail packaging or on a wrapper
o Be printed in: Univers Bold typeface; a normal weighted regular font that does not exceed 3 mm in height; and black or white. If printed in black, it may include a white background in the form of a rectangle no larger than 20 mm by 5 mm
o If applied by etching or debossing, must be in Pantone 448C
o Must not form a symbol or design; or represent, or be suggestive of, the brand name or a variant name</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Appear once on the bottom outer surface or any of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surfaces
• May also appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td>Calibration marks</td><td colspan="3">• One or more marks may appear on all or any 1 or 2 of the following:
o A retail packaging
o A wrapper that covers a retail packaging
o An adhesive label attached to a retail container of specified cigar
• Must appear only as is necessary for the automated manufacture
• If visible or otherwise detectable, must be consistent with the mark’s function in the manufacturing process</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Track and trace identifiers</td><td colspan="3">• Appear once
• For an alphanumeric code, be printed in: Univers Bold typeface; a normal weighted regular font that does not exceed 3 mm in height; black, grey and white or in any 1 or 2 of those 3 colours
• For a machine readable code, be printed in black, white and grey or in any 1 or 2 of those 3 colours</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Appear once on a side, top or bottom outer surface
• Printed on a background in Pantone 448C</td><td>• Appear once on any one of the side outer surfaces
• Be printed on a background in Pantone 448C; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the carton</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on a background in Pantone 448C; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Permitted marks</th><th>Cigarette packets</th><th>Cigarette cartons</th><th>Retail container of specified cigar</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Brand names
Variant names</td><td colspan="3">• Across 1 line only for each of the brand name and variant name
• Chinese characters in “中黑體” typeface; English letters and Arabic numerals in Univers Bold typeface
• Brand names: up to 6 mm in height; up to 50 mm in width for the brand name
• Variant names: up to 4 mm in height; up to 35 mm in width for the variant name
• The first letter in each word capitalised and with no other upper case letters
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C</td></tr>
<tr><td>• If appearing on the front outer surface: Horizontally below, and in the same orientation as the health warning
• If a variant name appears, immediately below the brand name
• Centred
• Be printed once on each of all or any 1 or 2 of the following outer surfaces: the front, top and bottom outer surfaces</td><td>• If appearing on the front outer surface: In the same orientation as the health warning
• If a variant name appears, immediately below the brand name
• Centred
• Be printed once on each of all or any 1 or 2 of the following outer surfaces: the front; and any 2 smallest side outer surfaces (whose inner sides are opposite to each other)</td><td>• Appear once on each of any 3 outer surfaces
• If a variant name appeared: parallel to, in the same orientation as, and immediately below the brand name
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Origin statements</td><td colspan="3">• Format as:
o Chinese version “(產品的原產地)製造”;
o English version “Made in (product origin)”
• Appear once in Chinese or English (or in both languages)
• Chinese version printed in “中黑體” typeface; English version printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Permitted marks</th><th>Cigarette packets</th><th>Cigarette cartons</th><th>Retail container of specified cigar</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Product descriptions</td><td colspan="3">• Appear only once in Chinese or English (or in both languages)
• Chinese version printed in “中黑體” typeface; English version printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C
• A product description on a wrapper covering more than one item of cigarette packet or retail container of specified cigar must be printed in white on a black rectangular background</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Format as “Cigarettes” and “煙支”
• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Format as “Cigars” and “雪茄”
• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Manufacturer’s date marks</td><td colspan="3">• Appear once
• Chinese characters printed in “中黑體” typeface; English letters and Arabic numerals printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td>Quantity marks</td><td colspan="3">• Chinese version printed in “中黑體” typeface; English version printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C
• In the same orientation as the brand name or a variant name
• At least 2 mm from the edges of a retail packaging of the product
• A quantity mark on a wrapper covering more than one item of cigarette packet or retail container of specified cigar must be printed in white on a black rectangular background</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Permitted marks</th><th>Cigarette packets</th><th>Cigarette cartons</th><th>Retail container of specified cigar</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td colspan="2">• Be printed in Chinese or English or in both languages on any 2 outer surfaces</td><td rowspan="2">• Appear in Chinese or English (or in both languages) on any 2 outer surfaces
• Quantity displayed in Arabic numerals and “sticks” or “支”
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td>• Quantity displayed in Arabic numerals and “sticks” or “支”
○ Example
Chinese — 20 支
English — 20 sticks</td><td>• Quantity displayed in Arabic numerals and “packets” or “包”
○ Example
Chinese — 10 包
English — 10 packets</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Bar codes</td><td colspan="3">• Appear once
• Black and white; or in Pantone 448C and white
• Rectangular in shape
• Must not form a design; or represent, or be suggestive of, the relevant brand name or variant name
• A bar code on a wrapper covering more than one item of cigarette packet of retail container of specific cigar must be printed on the wrapper; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the wrapper
• When a wrapper covers two or more cigarette packets or retail containers of specified cigars, the barcode on each of these may be covered by a solid black rectangle on the wrapper</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td>Names and addresses of the manufacturer, importer or wholesaler</td><td colspan="3">• Appear once in Chinese or English (or in both languages) on one outer surface
• Chinese version printed in “中黑體” typeface; English version printed in Univers Bold typeface; Arabic numerals in all versions printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C</td></tr>
</table>

<table>
<tr><th>Permitted marks</th><th>Cigarette packets</th><th>Cigarette cartons</th><th>Retail container of specified cigar</th></tr>
<tr><td></td><td colspan="2">• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Consumer contact telephone numbers</td><td colspan="3">• Appear once in Chinese or English (or in both languages) on one outer surface
• Chinese version printed in “中黑體” typeface; English version printed in Univers Bold typeface; Arabic numerals in all versions printed in Univers Bold typeface
• Up to 3 mm in height
• A normal weighted regular font
• Pantone Cool Gray 2C
• For a telephone number, must be a Hong Kong telephone number that is in service; and appear as numerals or as any combination of numerals, hyphens, spaces and brackets. Must not form a symbol or design; or represent, or be suggestive of, the brand name or a variant name
• A telephone number must be prefaced by：
o in Chinese “電話：”; and
o in English “Phone:”
• Be printed on the same surface as name and address (if any)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">• Be printed on any one of the side outer surfaces</td><td>• Appear once on any outer surface
• Printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label (transparent and uncoloured; or in Pantone 448C) attached firmly to the container</td></tr>
</table>

10. Health warnings

General requirements

(1) Packets and retail containers of conventional smoking products must bear a health warning in the form and manner prescribed in the Smoking (Public Health) (Prescribed Information) Order (Cap. 371B).

(2) Each form of the health warning prescribed in Cap. 371B must appear on the packets and retail containers of each brand of conventional smoking products with equal frequency during any continuous period of 24 months.

(3) The health warning printed on a retail container must not be obscured by –
- (a) any part of the lid of the packet or container when it is closed;
- (b) an affixture to the packet or container;
- (c) the wrapping of the packet or container;
- (d) an affixture to that wrapping; or
- (e) anything contained in that wrapping.

Packets or retail containers of cigarettes

(4) Major requirements for health warnings –
- (a) must be printed on the 2 largest surfaces of each packet and of each container.
- (b) each Chinese or English version of the warning must cover at least 85% of the area of the surface on which it appears.
- (c) for a packet, the Chinese version of the warning must be printed on the largest surface on the front of the packet (at which the flip-top lid of the packet is not hinged); and the English version of the same warning must be printed on the largest surface on the back of the packet (at which the flip-top lid of the packet is hinged), and must be positioned to meet the bottom edge.

Retail containers of specified cigars

(5) The health warning must be printed on the container; or appear on an adhesive label attached firmly to the container so as not to be easily removable.

(6) Major requirements for health warnings –
- (a) must appear on the 2 largest surfaces of each container.
- (b) the Chinese version of the warning must cover at least 70% of the front surface of the container.
- (c) the English version of the same warning must cover 100% of the back surface of the container.

11. Contact us

Telephone	:	2961 8823 (This hotline is handled by 1823)
Smoking Cessation Hotline	:	1833 183
Address	:	Room 1801-1803, 18/F, Wing On Kowloon Centre, 345 Nathan Road, Kowloon
Facsimile	:	2575 8944
Email	:	tobaccocontrol@dh.gov.hk