

6.3 PROHIBITIONS

PROHIBITED ARTICLES

Prohibited articles, if tendered for transmission, will be refused or, if detected in transit, detained. They will be dealt with in such a manner as Hongkong Post thinks fit, and the sender will in some cases be liable to prosecution.

FRADULENT ACT OR INTENT

Items sent in furtherance of a fraudulent act or with the intention of avoiding full payment of the appropriate charges are prohibited.

LETTER POST

The following are prohibited :

Arms and drugs

1. Arms and ammunition are prohibited unless their import and export are covered by relevant licences issued by the Hong Kong Police Force and the Trade Department.
2. Dangerous drugs; exceptionally and on production of an export licence, narcotics and psychotropic substances may be sent in insured letters for medical or scientific purposes to countries which admit them on these conditions.

Articles subject to packing regulations

3. Articles which by their packing may expose officers of Hongkong Post or the general public to danger, or soil or damage other items, postal equipment or third-party property. Metal fasteners used for closing must not have sharp edges, nor shall they hamper the execution of the postal service.
4. Perishable non-infectious articles. Anything liable to become offensive or injurious through decay during the time ordinarily occupied in transmission (particularly if addressed to a tropical or subtropical country, or having to pass through the tropics) unless sent in a hermetically sealed tin.
5. Liquids unless packed in the prescribed manner.

Certain advertisements, tickets and circulars

6. Betting advertisements if relating to an illegal business.
7. Fortune-telling advertisements.
8. Any lottery ticket, document or other thing relating to an unlawful lottery.
9. Moneylender's circulars if sent unsolicited.

Coin, bullion, paper money and valuable articles

DEFINITION OF BULLION. Uncoined and unmanufactured gold or silver, refined or unrefined, in the form of ingots or bars.

10. Coin and bullion and partly manufactured silver (not exceeding \$100 in value), manufactured gold or silver, or partly manufactured gold, platinum, precious stones, jewels and valuable articles of a like nature unless sent in registered letter or, where the regulations of the country of destination require, in insured letters. Exceptionally, articles exceeding \$2,500 in value must be sent by insured letters to countries to which the service extends or otherwise by registered letter post if the regulations of the country of destination allow.
11. Paper valuables such as banknotes, currency notes, securities payable to bearer and travellers' cheques unless sent in registered letters or, where the regulations of the country of destination require, in insured letters. Exceptionally, articles exceeding \$2,500 in value must be sent by insured letter to countries to which the service extends or otherwise by registered letter post if the regulations of the country of destination allow.

Dangerous, offensive and indecent articles

12. Dangerous articles, including explosives, flammable, corrosive, oxidizing, toxic, noxious or deleterious, or otherwise harmful substances; and sharp instruments not properly protected. Matches of all kinds, pressurized containers (aerosols), charged lighters and refills. Christmas crackers, however, are admitted.

All dangerous goods including perfumery products are prohibited to be sent to overseas destinations by air mail.

The onus of deciding whether a particular substance is dangerous rests with the sender of the goods who must satisfy himself on this important point before deciding to use the post.

13. Raw celluloid and articles made of celluloid.
14. Infectious substances.
15. Flammable films.
16. Paints, varnishes, enamels and kindred substances which have a flashpoint (closed cup test) below 37.8°C. Those with a flashpoint of 37.8°C and over are however admitted exceptionally subject to compliance with the special conditions. See *Special Packing Regulations for Certain Articles* under PACKING AND MAKE-UP in this Section.
17. Radioactive materials, whether solid, liquid or gaseous, manufactured items such as luminous dials, luminous compounds, ores and residues, which have any significant alpha, beta, gamma or neutron radiation. Exceptionally, small quantities of such materials are admitted by registered letter post if suitably packed and sent airmail, and provided that when made up for the post the radiation measured at the outside surface of a package does not exceed 10 millirontgen per 24 hours. Packets containing radioactive materials must show the name and address of the sender on both inner and outer wrappings; the inner wrapping must also show clearly the description of the radioactive material. The outer packing must be plainly and durably marked with the words *Matieres radioactives. Quantités admises au transport par poste (Radioactive materials. Quantities permitted for movement by post)* and a request in bold letters for the return of the item in the event of non-delivery.
18. Oiled paper; carbon paper unless certified on the customs declaration, if one is furnished, in the following terms : Carbon paper coated with wax and containing no oxidizable oily or fatty substance.

19. Filth.
20. Indecent or obscene communications, prints, photographs, books or other articles, and packets bearing grossly offensive, indecent or obscene words, marks or designs.

Dutiable goods

21. Articles liable to customs duty except under the conditions given under ARTICLES LIABLE TO CUSTOMS DUTY OR OTHER RESTRICTION in Section 9.

Living creatures

22. Living creatures. Exceptionally, the following are admissible in letter-post items other than insured items: bees, leeches and silkworms; parasites and destroyers of noxious insects intended for the control of those insects and exchanged between officially recognized institutions; flies of the family Drosophilidae for biomedical research exchanged between officially recognized institutions. However, senders or addressees must comply with any regulations in the country of destination as to the importation of insects and so on.

Oiled goods

23. Oilskins and similar oiled goods unless they have been properly stoved or otherwise properly dried to prevent spontaneous combustion. If sent by airmail the following special packing conditions apply :

Where the nature of the articles permit, they must be tightly rolled or coiled and wrapped or sealed with heavy paper. Fabricated articles not suitable for such wrappings must be packed in sealed metal boxes or metal lined wooden boxes.

Posting which residents of one country make in another country

24. Under the provisions of the Universal Postal Convention a postal administration is not bound to forward or deliver to the addressee letter-post items :
 - (a) which senders residing in its territory post or cause to be posted in a foreign country with the object of profiting by the more favourable rate conditions there; and
 - (b) which senders post or cause to be posted in large quantities in a country other than the country where they reside.

For items falling within category (a), the administration of destination may claim from the sender payment of the internal rates. If the sender refuses to pay these rates, the administration of destination may return the items to the administration of posting or handle them in accordance with its own legislation. For items in category (b), the administration of destination may either return the items to the administration of posting or handle them in accordance with its own legislation.

Miscellaneous

25. Counterfeit bank or currency notes and counterfeit postage stamps.

26.
 - (a) Packets bearing any fictitious postage stamp or counterfeit impression of a stamping machine, or words, letters or marks which are unauthorized and which may reasonably lead the recipient to believe that the packet is sent On Government Service.
 - (b) Packets purporting to be prepaid with any stamp, impression of a stamping machine or permit mailing impression which has previously been used to prepay any other postal packet.
27. Letters or packets containing documents having the character of current and personal correspondence exchanged between persons other than the sender and the addressee or persons living with them unless sent as clubbed packets under licence issued by the Postmaster General. See also *Clubbed Packets* under MISCELLANEOUS in Section 4.
28. Articles infringing trademark or copyright laws.
29. Articles prohibited under import regulations abroad, or subject to restrictions unless the requirements of the country of destination are complied with. Lists comprising a selection of such articles as are likely to be sent in ordinary course are given in the service information of the letter and parcel services under the entries of respective destination in the Appendix.

Apart from the articles mentioned in the service information referred to above many kinds of goods are entirely prohibited from entry into certain countries or are admitted only under licence. Exporters are advised not to despatch goods until they have satisfied themselves that the importer has obtained or will be able to obtain the necessary licence from the appropriate authority of the country of destination or that such a licence is not required.

Hongkong Post accepts no responsibility for the return or seizure of any postal article through the failure of the sender or addressee to comply with the necessary formalities.

30. Articles prohibited from export by the law of Hong Kong or which, being subject to any restriction imposed by law are posted otherwise than in accordance with that restriction.
31. Perishable non-infectious biological substances, including pathological objects and articles for medical examination or analysis, except in registered air letter packets when sent by and to officially recognized laboratories and subject to special packing conditions and special labels. See also the respective entry under PACKING AND MAKE-UP in this Section. As for perishable infectious biological substances, they are prohibited from transmission by post.
32. Items for delivery in Hong Kong posted abroad by persons or firms resident or carrying on business in Hong Kong with intent to avoid payment of higher local postage rates.
33. Textile articles sent by post to all overseas countries must be covered by valid export licences. This requirement applies to all types of textile articles without exception, i.e. sending of used clothes and is irrespective of the value of the textile articles sent by post.

PARCEL POST

The undermentioned articles are prohibited from transmission by parcel post to any place abroad :-

Certain letter post prohibitions applicable to parcels

1. Item 1 to 9, 12 to 20, 22 to 23, 25 to 31 and 33 above. The exception contained in item 22 by which parasites and destroyers of noxious insects are admitted to the letter post does not extend to the parcel post.

Articles subject to packing regulations

2. Foodstuffs and other articles attractive to rats must be packed in airtight receptacles which are rat-proof and do not allow the smell of their contents to escape.
3. Dyes and similar substances unless packed in the prescribed manner.

Coin, bullion, paper money and valuable articles

4. Coin, bullion and silver partly manufactured, precious metals and jewellery (see definition below) unless packed in the prescribed manner (given under PACKING AND MAKE-UP in this Section), and unless in insured parcels if sent to a place to which the insurance service extends.

DEFINITION OF JEWELLERY. For the purpose of these regulations the term jewellery means :

- (a) Gold, silver, platinum and other precious metals in a manufactured state, that is, a state in which value is added to the raw material by skilled workmanship; and in this definition and included any coin used or designed for purposes of ornament; and gold in the form of grain, sheet, strip, foil, rod, wire, tube or other partly manufactured form;
 - (b) Diamonds and precious stones;
 - (c) Watches, the cases of which are entirely or mainly composed of gold, silver, platinum or other precious metals; and
 - (d) Any article of like nature which, apart from workmanship, has an intrinsic or marketable value.
5. Banknotes, currency notes, securities of any kind payable to bearer and traveller's cheques except in insured parcels if sent to a place to which the insurance service extends.

Dangerous goods

6. All dangerous goods including perfumery products are prohibited to be sent to overseas destinations by air mail.

Miscellaneous

7. Apart from the prohibitions mentioned above, many countries abroad, for various

reasons, impose restrictions on the importation of certain articles. Thus, the importation of the undermentioned articles may be restricted for the reasons indicated :

- (a) Pharmaceutical preparations, fresh meat and other foodstuffs, soiled clothing, in the interests of public health;
 - (b) Plants and parts of plants, including fruit, especially the vine in the case of vine-growing countries, usually for the prevention of the spread of phylloxera;
 - (c) Hides, skins, wool and other external parts of animals, for the protection of animals against contagious disease;
 - (d) Tobacco, playing cards, salt, as subject to state monopoly.
8. Articles so restricted can, as a rule, be sent if they comply with certain conditions and in some cases a sanitary certificate in a prescribed form is necessary. In general, plants must be packed securely in such a way that they can be easily examined and where a phylloxera or other sanitary certificate is required, the despatch note, customs declaration, and the cover of the parcel should be noted, for example, Phylloxera Certificate Annexed.

If, notwithstanding the information set out above, parcels containing articles known to be prohibited from importation into the country of destination are observed in the post, they are not forwarded but are returned to the senders. Parcels declared to contain articles of which the importation is permitted only under certain conditions, will generally speaking, be accepted and despatched. The onus of ensuring compliance with these conditions rests with the sender, and Hongkong Post accepts no responsibility for the return or seizure of any parcel through the failure of the sender or addressee to comply with the necessary formalities.

EMBARRASSING PACKETS

Packets likely to impede the work of Hongkong Post staff are also prohibited. This may be caused by the method of addressing; the position of the stamp; and the colour, type, shape and dimensions of the envelope, packet or card.

Envelopes

The following types of envelopes are prohibited :-

1. A packet enclosed in a wholly transparent envelope, or an aperture envelope, that is an envelope with one or more open (cut out) panels.
2. A packet enclosed in a window envelope, that is an envelope with one or more transparent panels which does not conform to the following conditions :-
 - (a) If an envelope has only one transparent panel, this panel must be used solely for the address of the addressee subject to the conditions set out below :
 - (i) The panel must be situated on the plain side of the envelope which is not provided with the closing flap.
 - (ii) The panel must be made of such a material (such as polystyrene) and in such a way that the address can be easily read through it. The maximum reflectance of the window material should be 65% and the maximum window opacity should be 25%.

(iii) The extreme edge of the window panel should be securely adhered to the transparent material around the entire panel edge without excessive creasing or wrinkling.

(iv) The panel must be rectangular, its greatest dimension paralleled to the length of the envelope so that the address of the addressee appears in the same direction. However, for items of size 229 x 324 mm (C4 format) the panel can be placed transversely in such a way that its greatest dimension is parallel to the width of the envelope.

(v) A space of 40 mm must be left above the panel for the postage stamp and date-stamp impression.

(vi) A minimum space of at least 15 mm must be left between the sides and the base of the panel and the respective edges of the envelope.

(vii) Nothing other than the addressee's name and address must be visible through the panel and no part of the address block should be closer than 2 character widths from any edge of the panel.

(viii) Enclosures must be folded in such a way that they cannot move about in the envelope causing the address to be hidden.

(ix) The panel should occupy an area not less than 60 mm long and 20 mm high (the preferred height is 30 mm).

(x) The panel must be located within the address zone (see diagram under *Printing on Envelopes* in METHOD OF ADDRESSING in this Section).

(b) If an envelope has more than one transparent panel, the panel reserved for the address of the addressee must conform to the conditions laid down in paragraph 2(a). For the other panels, they must conform to the conditions set out below :-

(i) They must be positioned to the left of the address panel and outside the address zone (see diagram under *Printing on Envelopes* in METHOD OF ADDRESSING in this Section).

(ii) They must be smaller than the address panel so that the address of the addressee stands out clearly.

(iii) Advertising panels must not contain an address. They may contain advertisements for products or services.

3. A packet enclosed in an envelope of which the address portion had been divided into separate sections for the insertion of successive addresses.

4. Envelope that are sealed with staples or metal clip.

Addresses

A packet having anything printed or otherwise impressed upon or attached to the address side which, either by tending to prevent the easy and quick reading of the address, or by inconvenient proximity to the postage stamps, or in any other way, is likely to impede the officers of Hongkong Post in dealing with it. Cards, envelopes, folders, labels and wrappers are, however, admitted if the writing or printing is confined to the left-hand half of the address side, the right-hand half being reserved exclusively for the postage stamps and the address.

A packet having its address parallel to the breadth instead of to the longer side.

Air mail envelopes in the local or overseas surface services

Envelopes bearing an airmail label, or printed in a distinctive airmail design, including envelopes with coloured bar edges, should not be used for local or overseas surface postings. Such items may be delayed during processing by Hongkong Post or in the case of surface mail items they may be surcharged as if they were intended for air mail. Senders using airmail envelopes for other than the airmail service do so at their own risk.

Quality

The use of flimsy paper is not recommended for making envelopes. Letters passing through modern post-marking and sorting machines and some letter transfer systems, frequently at high speed, are subject to considerable stress. The substance of the paper from which envelopes are made should not be less than 63 grammes per square metre.

Colour

Cards, folders, labels or envelopes should preferably be white, but there is no objection to any other colour provided it does not cause strain on the eyes of the officers of Hongkong Post. Red coloured envelopes are not acceptable to some overseas destinations and are therefore normally not accepted for overseas post. Dark coloured envelopes e.g. dark brown, dark blue, dark grey and dark red should be avoided. The minimum average reflectance should be 60% for white paper and 50% for darker shades such as manilla (measured over the range 500 – 700 nm). It is essential, however, that the ink used for the address should be in sharp contrast with the tint of the paper and the background to the address should be of one colour only. Reverse colour printing (e.g. light characters on a dark background) should not be used. The foregoing also applies to the visible portion of enclosures with transparent panels.

Size

The introduction of letter mechanisation has made it necessary to specify dimensions of a letter post item for machine handling. The size of a letter post item and the ratio of its length to its height are factors which affect the quick and efficient sorting of letters. Square or near square items do not travel easily through mail handling machines. Cards, envelopes or folders with the following dimensions are most suitable for machine handling :-

- longest side at least 1.4 times shortest side
- no smaller than 90 mm x 140 mm

- no larger than 167 mm x 260 mm
- no thinner than 0.25 mm
- no thicker than 7 mm
- no lighter than 2 g
- no heavier than 100 g

Re-use of envelopes

An envelope which has previously been used for postal purposes should not be re-used unless it has been suitably reconditioned by completely covering all the old postage stamps, stamp impressions, permit mailing impressions, Hongkong Post sorting barcode and addresses (including the address of the sender if no longer relevant) with gummed white slips which must be well stuck down. Used registered envelopes must not be re-used for the unregistered post unless they are covered both back and front with suitable adhesive paper in such a way as to hide effectively all date-stamping and registration marks. Particulars of the conditions governing the re-use of envelopes for the registered post are given under REGISTRATION in Section 5. Stamps in prepayment of fresh postage must always be affixed along the top of the reconditioned envelope at the right-hand corner on the same side as the new address in a position convenient for date-stamping.

Stamps

A packet should not bear on its address side an adhesive label or printed design resembling a postage stamp in shape or size.

A packet having a postage stamp affixed elsewhere than at the right-hand top corner of the address side – when using more than one stamp these should be affixed side by side in a line across the length of the envelope from the top right hand corner of the face side.

'Trap' packets

A packet having an opening large enough to entrap small letters or postcards is called 'trap' packet. Envelopes with ordinary tuck-in flaps may be used up to the following limits of size :-

- Not over 90 mm in depth : opening not over 150 mm in length
- Not over 100 mm in depth : opening not over 140 mm in length
- Over 100 mm in depth : opening not over 115 mm in length

If a larger envelope is necessary, senders should adopt a pattern having a special kind of flap which can be so adjusted as not to leave a large opening or the packet can be fastened with string which can be easily untied. If metal paper fasteners are used, they must be covered with tape or other protective material to obviate risk of injury to the hands of Hongkong Post staff. Paper clips or staples must not be used.

The maximum dimensions for a folder are 260 mm in length and 167 mm in breadth.

The above restrictions on 'trap' packets may be relaxed in the case of magazines, booklets and pamphlets being enclosed in paper wrappers with openings on both ends provided that the following conditions are met :

- the magazine etc. must be securely attached to the paper wrapper;
- the wrapper must be tightly fit to the magazine, etc; and
- the items must be posted under the rebate scheme of the Permit Mailing System.

PLASTIC ENVELOPES OR WRAPPERS

Transparent plastic envelopes or wrappers are admissible in the local and overseas post provided that the following conditions are met :-

1. Plastic envelopes should preferably not be smaller than 167 mm x 260 mm otherwise they will cause transportation problems within the mechanisation equipment.
2. Items accepted for transmission through the post must be posted in bulk and prepaid under the Permit Mailing System or by means of postage franking impressions made on self-adhesive labels of approved type. This facility is only available to posting made in bulk of no less than a quantity of 100 identical items for despatch by surface mail to places abroad and also for delivery within Hong Kong, or 100 identical items for transmission by air to overseas destinations.
3. The surface of the plastic should have a non-slip and non-reflective quality.
4. The contents are fairly rigid and reasonable fit to the envelope with not more than 25 mm overlap overall.
5. The envelopes are sealed completely at all edges and flaps. Sealing by pressing two seams together along the edge of the envelope is not acceptable.
6. There must be a white opaque band of at least 127 mm long x 76 mm wide running lengthways along the middle. The band must be able to take lasting manuscript endorsements and have the Postage Paid Imprint, Permit No. and return address printed on it. An address label should be stuck on the outside of the band.
7. Alternatively, the opaque band may consist of material which will not take a lasting endorsement, but only if the external label will. The label must then be not less than 127 mm x 76 mm and the Postage Paid Imprint, Permit No. and return address may be printed on it or the band.
8. Where a separate address label is used and appears beneath the cover it must be placed so that it cannot move about and can easily be read.
9. The usual Printed Papers rate (only applicable to overseas mail) conditions apply (e.g. all items must bear the appropriate service superscription *Printed Papers*).
10. These items may be sent to any country.