

# Tobacco Control Board urged to smoke out offenders

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The audit report says enforcement officials should visit areas where smoking offences are reported more. Image: Shutterstock

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Wendy Wong reports

The Tobacco Control Office should concentrate on places where smoking bans are breached regularly and officers should also carry out more nighttime inspections, the Director of Audit said in a report on Wednesday.

The auditor analysed more than 8,000 inspections conducted by the Tobacco Control Office at more than 2,000 venues between August and October last year.

It found that officers inspected shops, malls, commercial and industrial buildings most frequently, close to 3,000 times. Only 264, or 3 percent of all inspections, were conducted at bus stations.

Despite this, 40 percent of checks at bus stations led to smoking offences being detected, a higher rate than at other venues.

The watchdog also had concerns about the time of day inspections are carried out.

It found that only 1.6 percent of all checks were carried out between 6pm and 6am, even though this is the period when inspections are most likely to find offences being committed.

It also found that 20 percent of visitors to the city caught committing smoking offences over the past five years did not pay the HK\$1500 fine. For locals, the percentage of offenders who did not pay up rose from 0.4 percent in 2013 to 3.2 percent last year.