

Clubs, bars risk losing licence if patrons or staff caught with Kpods

Onus is on the outlet to ensure drug-laced vapes are not brought into premises: Police

David Sun
Crime Correspondent

Public entertainment outlets risk losing their licence if their staff or patrons are caught with drug-laced vapes, including devices laced with etomidate, also known as Kpods.

Etomidate has been listed as a Class C drug since Sept 1.

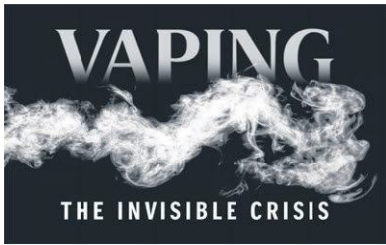
In response to queries from The Straits Times, a police spokesman said the onus is on the outlet to ensure drug-laced vapes are not brought into its premises.

“As part of their existing licensing conditions, public entertain-

ment outlets are required to comply and to take all appropriate steps to ensure that the sale, consumption or trafficking of controlled drugs, including etomidate, are not committed in their premises,” he said.

The spokesman added that if caught, the public entertainment outlets will be investigated and issued demerit points that can lead to the suspension or cancellation of their licence.

The licence can also be suspended immediately if the licensee, outlet operator, business owner or partner is caught with a drug-laced vape.



WHO TO CALL, WHERE TO GO

- The public can report vaping offences to the Tobacco Regulation Branch on 6684-2036 or 6684-2037 from 9am to 9pm daily, or online at

www.go.gov.sg/reportvape

- Those who need help to quit vaping can visit gov.sg/stopvaping or join the Health Promotion Board's I Quit programme by calling the QuitLine on 1800-438-2000

Vaping is not listed under the licensing rules for public entertainment outlets, and while there were licensing requirements relating to drugs, there were no explicit rules targeting the abuse of etomidate.

This meant that even when the authorities caught Kpod abusers inside bars and clubs, they could not issue demerit points to the outlet.

Etomidate was previously listed

under the Poisons Act, but it has been listed as a Class C drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act (MDA) since Sept 1.

Vaping has persisted in nightlife outlets despite the introduction of a slew of measures to tackle vaping and Kpods, including enhanced enforcement and greater public education.

Young clubgoers were spotted sneaking puffs inside and around

popular clubs like Zouk, Drip and Marquee even after the roll-out of stricter action.

From Aug 29 to Sept 6, 26 people were caught for vape-related offences during multi-agency raids on 69 public entertainment outlets.

They include a 23-year-old man who was arrested for suspected drug consumption. The others were issued fines.

Under the Tobacco (Control of Advertisements and Sale) Act, first-time vape offenders above 18 are issued \$700 fines, while second-time offenders have to attend rehabilitation for three months.

Those caught a third or subsequent time face prosecution and a fine of up to \$2,000.

Under the MDA, etomidate abusers above 18 are issued \$700 fines and made to attend rehabilitation for up to six months the first time they are caught.

If caught a second time, they must undergo mandatory supervision for six months, including drug testing and rehabilitation.

Those caught a third or subsequent time are sent to a drug rehabilitation centre where they undergo drug testing and supervision for 12 months.

The police spokesman said public entertainment outlets should take steps to prevent lawbreaking on their premises.

The spokesman said: “They should ensure that there is no sale, consumption or trafficking of controlled drugs committed by any employee while on duty, any patron or other person in the licensed premises.”

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TTSH rolls out new online portal to guide caregivers

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Correspondent

Ms Jean Lim found herself out of her depth in February, when she suddenly had to care for her 71-year-old mother who had a fall.

Her mother had to undergo leg surgery after falling at an MRT station on the eve of Chinese New Year, and was later found to have degenerative disc disease – a condition where the soft discs between the spinal bones wear out over time.

The elderly woman chose to continue living on her own after being discharged from the hospital, instead of moving in with one of her children.

Ms Lim – who is married and has three children, aged four to 13 – found that a lot of work was needed to take care of her mother's needs.

This included installing grab bars and other modifications in the shower to lower the risk of another fall, as well as making arrangements for home therapy.

“I was actually caught a bit unprepared,” said the 42-year-old, who works in the financial sector. “I did not know where to go for help.”

To help people like Ms Lim, Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) has introduced CarePal, an online portal that aims to serve as a one-stop portal for caregivers.

Part of the NHG Health mobile app, CarePal allows caregivers to create a profile of their loved ones who are receiving care.

It then generates a resource package customised to the needs of the care recipient.

CarePal includes a “caregiving calculator”, which provides users with estimated costs associated with caregiving.

It also includes a curated resource library with links to articles, videos and infographics which provide users with information on available community services, how best to support their loved ones, and how to take care of themselves amid the pressures of caregiving.

CarePal is part of a slew of efforts under Project Carer Matters 2, an initiative by TTSH to strengthen the caregiving ecosystem in

Singapore. The project is supported by the National Research Foundation under the National Medical Research Council's grant call on the caregiving ecosystem.

It is an enhancement to an earlier initiative introduced during the Covid-19 pandemic, which sought to identify and alleviate the problems faced by family caregivers.

As part of the project, TTSH is working with the Home Nursing Foundation on a befriending programme that matches more experienced caregivers with newer ones as a form of peer support.

TTSH nursing deputy director Chan Ee Yue said more initiatives are needed to support Singapore's caregivers.

She cited research conducted by the hospital, published in the Journal of Nutrition, Health and Ageing in 2019, which found that about a third of caregivers are at risk of depression and poor quality of life.

A 2010 report estimated the number of full-time caregivers here at around 210,000, said Dr Chan, who is the project lead and principal investigator for Project Carer Matters.

This figure is “just going to escalate higher and higher” as Singapore's population rapidly ages, she added.

Over 21 per cent of its population will be 65 or older by 2030.

In the longer term, Dr Chan said she hopes CarePal can benefit caregivers across Singapore, beyond just those under the NHG Health cluster.

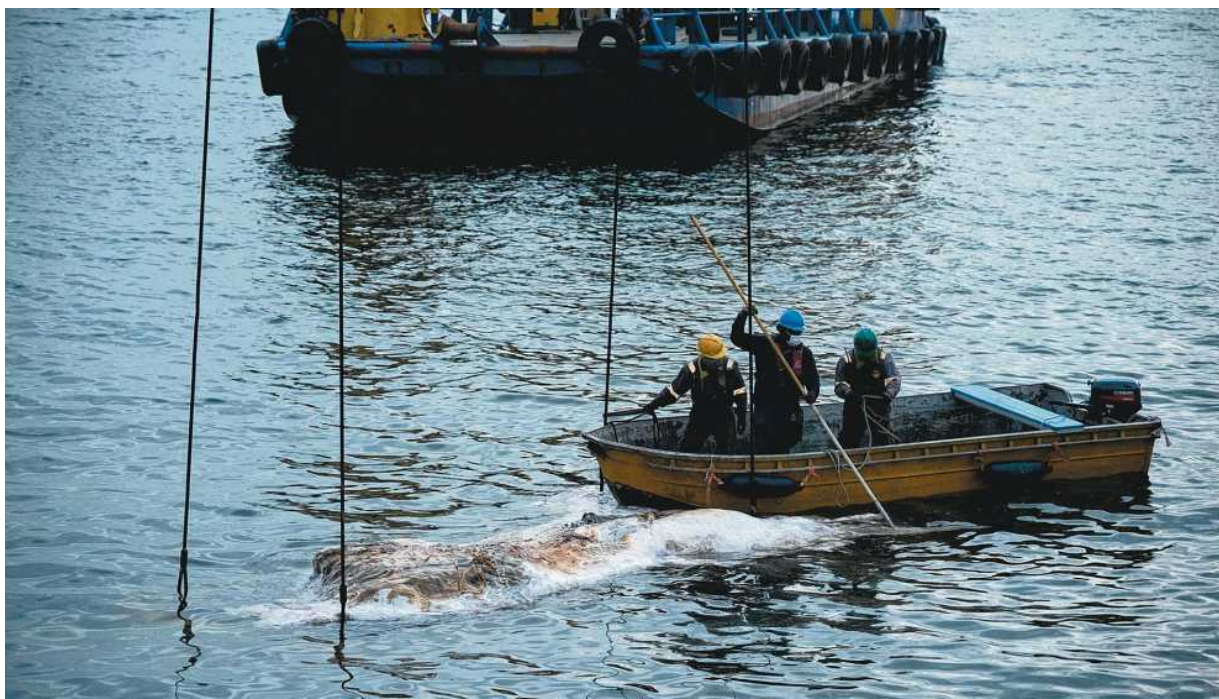
Project Carer Matters is also testing the home use of a fall detection system currently in place at TTSH.

Developed by healthtech firm Conex Healthcare, the system uses smart cameras and thermal imaging to detect falls and immediately alert a command centre, which will in turn inform caregivers and emergency services if needed.

Among those testing the new system is Ms Lim, who has it installed at her mother's flat.

“Especially for caregivers who are unable to visit (our loved ones) daily, it gives us peace of mind,” she said.

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The highly decomposed body of a baleen whale being retrieved by the Singapore Salvage Engineers crew in waters near Marina Bay Cruise Centre on Sept 12. PHOTO: LEE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM, NUS

6.3m-long baleen whale carcass found in waters off Tanjong Pagar

Ang Qing
Correspondent

The 6.3m-long carcass of a baleen whale was found in the waters off Tanjong Pagar on Sept 6.

Announcing the discovery in a statement on Sept 16, the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at NUS said the cause of the whale's death is unclear.

The carcass was in an advanced stage of decomposition, and research is under way to find out more about the animal, said the museum's curator of mammals Marcus Chua.

The incomplete specimen is identified as a roqual whale of the genus Balaenoptera, a group of filter-feeding baleen whales that includes the blue whale, the world's largest.

The carcass is estimated to weigh about six tonnes, according to the museum.

Officers from the National Parks Board had alerted the museum's

researchers to the carcass, which was missing half its body. The museum's scientists estimate that the whale would have been 9m to 12m long when it was alive.

While preparations were under way to recover the delicate carcass, it was reported on Sept 12 to have drifted towards Marina Bay Cruise Centre.

To prevent it from being lost to the open sea, museum staff worked with Singapore Salvage Engineers, which specialises in maritime emergency, salvage, rescue and support services, to secure the remains.

The carcass is now safely secured in a restricted area for processing and further study by a team led by Dr Chua.

“Whale encounters in Singapore waters are rare. Hence, each stranding provides unique opportunities to study these large marine mammals,” he said.

Dr Chua told The Straits Times that there is no risk of the decomposed whale exploding due to a build-up of gases as its abdominal

cavity was already open when it was found.

But one challenge for the team is the carcass' stench.

“Several team members have variously described it as decaying dried fish or dried squid, even durian,” said Dr Chua. “For me, it's... ammonia with decaying flesh and musty leather seats, topped with a sharp acrid odour when the wind blows.”

The whale's age and sex have yet to be determined, and tissue samples have been collected for future genetic analysis.

The museum said it will share the dissection process and subsequent findings with the public when ready.

Baleen whales lack teeth and instead have comb-like baleen plates in their upper jaws, which filter zooplankton and other small prey from the water.

They range from the 6.5m-long pygmy whale to the 30m-long blue whale.

Although the whales are seldom seen in Singapore waters, carcass-

es were discovered off Pulau Bukom in 1980 and in the South China Sea near Pedra Branca in 2009.

Many species of baleen whales undertake long annual migrations between polar feeding grounds and tropical breeding areas, making them widespread across the world's oceans, according to the museum.

The discovery also marks a decade since the museum last encountered and studied a whale carcass found in Singapore waters.

Months after the museum opened in 2015, the carcass of a sperm whale, later named Jubi Lee, washed up near Jurong Island.

Head of the museum Darren Yeo said: “It is both moving and serendipitous that another whale carcass should arrive in our waters during our 10th anniversary year – exactly 10 years after the museum's launch and the discovery of Jubi Lee – just as we have been reflecting on a decade of research, public engagement, and conservation.”

The 2015 specimen, which measures 10.6m in length, is now displayed at the museum.

The female whale was the first recorded sperm whale in Singapore, and confirmed the presence of the species in coastal waters around Peninsular Malaysia.

Its carcass suggested that it could have originated from a population in the Indian Ocean near the Cocos (Keeling) Islands in Australia or western Indonesia. The whale's gut revealed a wide variety of deep-sea prey, which indicated that it was feeding well outside Singapore waters before it likely died from a ship strike, as indicated by a large wound with broken backbones.

The latest baleen whale find echoes an earlier chapter of Singapore's natural history, when the skeleton of another baleen whale was displayed here, the museum noted.

The Raffles Museum in Stamford Road, now the National Museum of Singapore, displayed the skeleton of a 13.4m-long blue whale that was stranded near Melaka in 1892.

The skeleton, once dubbed the Singapore Whale, was exhibited from 1907 to 1974, before it was gifted to the National Museum of Malaysia. It can be found today at the Labuan Marine Museum in Malaysia.

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Charity RLAF seeks donations for disaster-hit Afghanistan, Pakistan

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Local charity Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation (RLAF) has launched a fund-raising campaign to raise at least \$100,000 for communities affected by recent natural disasters in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The campaign runs from Sept 15 to Oct 5, with all donated funds going towards search-and-rescue support, food, clean water, emergency health and medical supplies, mental health and psychosocial support, and other essential supplies to affected people in both countries, RLAF said in a statement on Sept 16.

Afghanistan was hit by a 6-magnitude earthquake, described as one of the country's deadliest in recent years, on Aug 31, and a 5.5-

magnitude quake on Sept 2. More than 2,200 people were killed, with at least 8,000 homes destroyed.

In mid-August, Pakistan was hit by severe flash floods that submerged over 2,000 villages. More than two million people were displaced. Thirty-three people have died so far.

To donate via:

- **PayNow:** Key in RLAF's UEN 200910530Z and indicate “AFGHANEARTHQUAKE2025” or “PAKISTANFLOODS2025” in the remarks.
- **Interbank transfer:** To be made to RLAF's OCBC current account 601313315001.
- **Cheque:** Payable to RLAF, indicating the donor's name, NRIC or UEN for tax-deductible donations, contact number and “AFGHANEARTHQUAKE2025”

or “PAKISTANFLOODS2025” at the back of the cheque, which should be mailed to RLAF at Masjid Yusof Ishak, 10 Woodlands Drive 17, Singapore 737740.

- **Giving.sg:** Afghanistan Appeal page (<https://tinyurl.com/RLAFAfghanistanAppeal>), Pakistan Appeal page (<https://tinyurl.com/RLAFPakistanAppeal>) and RLAF's website (<https://tinyurl.com/rlafdonations>)

Also, RLAF will be collecting donations via participating mosques here between Sept 26 and Oct 2. Donation boxes will be marked with the RLAF logo and the purpose of the appeal.

The donations will then be chan-

nelled through the Singapore Red Cross (SRC) to the affected communities. The SRC's partners include the Afghan Red Crescent Society, Pakistan Red Crescent Society, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

RLAF chief executive Adnan Abdul Hamid said in the statement: “Every contribution, no matter how small, brings hope and relief to those who need it most. We are confident that our community will come together to support the communities affected by the natural disasters.”

Acting Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs Faishal Ibrahim said in the statement: “This initiative reflects the compassion and solidarity of Singaporeans with those facing challenging circumstances.

“I'm deeply grateful for the strong support and contributions to past RLAF fund raisers, and I hope we can once again come together to support this worthy cause.”

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Caregiver Jean Lim (centre) with Tan Tock Seng Hospital's nursing deputy director Chan Ee Yue and senior nurse researcher George Frederick Glass. The new CarePal portal allows caregivers to create a profile of their loved ones who are receiving care, and then generates a resource package customised to the needs of the care recipient. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG