

Germany: VW cars with suspect software in Europe too

September 24 2015, byGeir Moulson



Volkswagen ornaments sit in a box in a scrap yard in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2015. The revelation that Volkswagen rigged diesel-powered cars to emit lower emissions during EPA tests is particularly stunning since Volkswagen has long projected a quirky brand image with an emphasis on being environmentally friendly—an image that now appears in tatters. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

The software at the center of Volkswagen's emissions scandal in the U.S.

was built into the automaker's cars in Europe as well, Germany said Thursday, though it isn't yet clear if it helped cheat tests as it did in the U.S.

A day after longtime CEO Martin Winterkorn resigned over the scandal, a member of Volkswagen's supervisory board said he expects more executives to step down. The company's supervisory board meets Friday and could announce new resignations then as well as a new CEO.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency disclosed Friday that stealth software makes VW's 2009-2015 model cars powered by 2.0-liter diesel engines run cleaner during emissions tests than in actual driving.

The EPA accused VW of installing the so-called "defeat device" in 482,000 cars sold in the United States. VW later acknowledged that similar software exists in 11 million diesel cars worldwide and set aside 6.5 billion euros (\$7.2 billion) to cover the costs of the scandal.

The company has told officials that the vehicles in question included VW cars with 1.6-liter and 2-liter diesel engines in Europe, German Transport Minister Alexander Dobrindt said Thursday.

"We don't yet have figures for how many of these 11 million cars that are apparently affected are in Europe," Dobrindt said. "That will be cleared up in the next few days."

Authorities will continue working with Volkswagen to determine what cars exactly are involved.



In this March 12, 2015 picture Volkswagen CEO, Martin Winterkorn, looks at his watch. during the anual press conference of Volkswagen AG in Berlin. Volkswagen CEO Martin Winterkorn said Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2015 he is stepping down. (Jochen Luebke/dpa via AP)

It isn't yet clear to what extent the scandal affects other brands in the Volkswagen Group, which has 12 brands in all—including Seat, Audi, Skoda and Porsche. It was also not clear whether the software would have led to VW cheating on emissions tests outside the U.S. as well.

Dobrindt this week set up a commission of inquiry to look into the scandal. The motor transport authority is conducting static and road tests on Volkswagen models and spot tests on cars made by other manufacturers, German and foreign.

In neighboring France, Environment Minister Segolene Royal on

Thursday announced random tests of about 100 French cars to ensure that their engines meet pollution standards in the wake of Volkswagen's emissions scandal.

And the European Union's executive Commission called on national authorities "to look into the implications for vehicles sold in Europe and ensure that EU pollutant emission standards are scrupulously respected."

On Thursday, attorneys general in at least 27 U.S. states and Washington, D.C. announced they would jointly investigate VW's representations to consumers and would send subpoenas to the company, according to the Michigan Attorney General's Office.

Olaf Lies, economy and transport minister of VW's home state Lower Saxony, which holds a 20 percent stake in the company, said the investigation into the scandal was only just starting.



A Volkswagen diesel sits behind a security fence on a storage lot near a VW dealership Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2015, in Salt Lake City. Volkswagen CEO

Martin Winterkorn resigned Wednesday, days after admitting that the world's top-selling carmaker had rigged diesel emissions to pass U.S. tests during his tenure. (AP Photo/Rick Bowmer)

"There must be people responsible for allowing the manipulation of emission levels to happen," he told rbb-Inforadio.

Winterkorn said Wednesday he took responsibility for the "irregularities" found by U.S. inspectors in VW's diesel engines, but insisted he had personally done nothing wrong.

VW is filing a criminal complaint with German prosecutors, seeking to identify those responsible for any illegal actions in connection with the scandal.

Other auto companies have seen their shares drop, too, though there have been no allegations they cheated emissions tests.

Shares in BMW dropped 5.2 percent to close Thursday at 75.68 euros after Germany's Auto Bild magazine reported that road tests by the International Council on Clean Transportation showed the BMW X3 xdrive model exceeding European emissions limits by more than 11 times. It did not say what the cause for the alleged problem was.

BMW said in a statement that it was not familiar with the test and would ask the ICCT for clarification. It said that "the BMW Group does not manipulate or rig any emissions tests."

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