

German order triggers recall of 8.5M VW cars in Europe (Update)

October 15 2015, by Frank Jordans



In this Sept. 25, 2015 photo newly appointed Volkswagen CEO Matthias Mueller speaks during a press statement after a meeting of Volkswagen's supervisory board in Wolfsburg, Germany. Germany's motor transport agency is ordering a mandatory recall of Volkswagen cars sold with software that enabled them to evade diesel emissions testing, as it was announced Thursday, Oct. 15, 2015. Mueller has said a recall could start in January and be completed by the end of next year in Germany. (AP Photo/Michael Sohn)

German authorities on Thursday ordered a recall of all Volkswagen cars fitted with emissions test-cheating software, a decision that will affect 8.5 million VW diesel vehicles across the 28-nation European Union.

The Federal Motor Transport Authority announced that the recall would affect 2.4 million vehicles in Germany. Under EU rules, cars that are cleared in one country are automatically approved across the bloc, so the repeal also affects Volkswagen vehicles elsewhere in the union.

Austrian authorities have already said some 363,000 VW cars there are affected by the recall.

Volkswagen said in a statement that it would approach customers, who can already enter their car's serial number on a special website to find out whether it is affected. Apart from the company's VW brand, Audi, SEAT and Skoda cars can also be checked.

The fix will be free for customers, it said.

German Transport Minister Alexander Dobrindt said Volkswagen would have to present replacement software for certain cars that have a 2.0 liter diesel engine this month and begin fitting vehicles with them next year.

"VW is ordered (...) to remove the software from all vehicles and to take appropriate measures to ensure that the emissions rules are fulfilled," Dobrindt told reporters in Berlin.



In this Sept. 24, 2015 file photo, the grille of a Volkswagen is decorated with the iconic company logo at on the lot of a VW dealership in Boulder, Colo. Volkswagen has disclosed to U.S. regulators that there's additional suspect software in its 2016 diesel models that would potentially help exhaust systems run cleaner during government tests. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley, File)

The dpa news agency reported that the Motor Transport Authority, which answers to Dobrindt's ministry, rejected a Volkswagen proposal for a voluntary recall.

Dobrindt refrained from publicly criticizing Volkswagen, saying cooperation with the German automaker was "extraordinarily good."

He indicated that the recall may last through 2016 because vehicles fitted with smaller 1.6 liter diesel engines will require physical adjustments rather than just a software update.

Those hardware changes, which may not be ready before September 2016, will determine the timeline, he said.

In a letter to Dobrindt provided to The Associated Press, Volkswagen's chief executive Matthias Mueller said the recall would "stretch through the 2016 calendar year."

The company recently disclosed the existence of further suspect software in 2016 diesel models. Dobrindt said additional tests were under way that would include examining emissions outside the lab.

Asked about German media reports that more than two dozen Volkswagen managers had been suspended by the company amid signs that knowledge of the defeat devices was widespread, Dobrindt said his ministry had "no information about who decided where, when at Volkswagen about the use of such software."

Volkswagen has said that some managers had been suspended, but said the report Wednesday of up to 30 "lacks any basis."

Volkswagen has said around 11 million cars with the software were sold worldwide, 2.8 million of them in Germany. Dobrindt said only 2.4 million Volkswagen diesel cars with the software are still registered in Germany.

Mueller, the CEO, said in his letter Thursday that a "concerted and reliable approach" by all EU members would be in the best interest of customers.

Volkswagen faces possible fines after U.S. authorities discovered it had equipped 482,000 cars with software that disabled emissions controls except when the cars were being tested.

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