

# US Volkswagen chief admits knew of emissions problem in 2014

October 8 2015, by Carlos Hamann

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Volkswagen has announced its plans to fix vehicles with the emissions busting software, saying it would take until the end of next year for the issue to be resolved

Volkswagen's US chief revealed he knew more than a year ago that the group's cars possibly breached pollution rules, as he prepared to apologize Thursday before Congress over the massive scandal.

In testimony released ahead of his hearing before a Congressional committee, Michael Horn offered a "sincere apology" over Volkswagen's use of a software designed to cheat pollution tests.

The German auto giant has sunk into the deepest crisis of its history after revealing that it equipped 11 million of its vehicles worldwide with software that switches the engine to a low-emissions mode during tests.

The so-called defeat devices then turn off pollution controls when the vehicle is on the road, allowing it to spew out harmful levels of toxic gases.

The shocking revelations have wiped more than 40 percent off Volkswagen's market capitalization, but the direct and indirect costs are still incalculable as the company risks fines in several countries and possible damages from customers' lawsuits.

Horn said he learnt in early 2014 of "a possible emissions non-compliance", after researchers at the University of West Virginia found that VW cars it tested were releasing up to 40 times as much nitrogen oxide as was legally permissible.

He said he was told by his staff then that US authorities could conduct tests for so-called "defeat devices", which switches the car to a low emissions mode when cars are undergoing tests.

The US boss for Volkswagen said he was informed later that year that technical teams had a plan to bring the vehicles into compliance, and that they were working with the authorities on the process.

Volkswagen finally admitted to US regulators in September this year that hidden software installed in certain diesel vehicles "could recognize whether a vehicle was being operated in a test laboratory or on the road,"

Horn said.

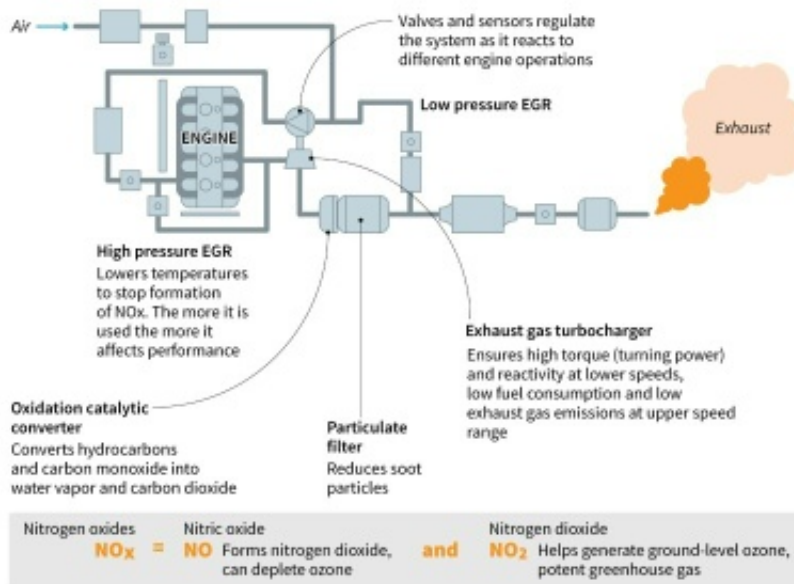
Admitting that the company had "broken the trust of our customers, dealerships, and employees, as well as the public and regulators," Horn vowed to hold those responsible accountable.

### Volkswagen's search for a fix

VW has admitted that up to 11 million diesel cars are fitted with devices that can switch pollution controls on or off

#### Diesel engine exhaust gas recirculation (EGR)

Diesel engines require sophisticated controls to reduce poisonous NO<sub>x</sub>



#### Two key systems in VW models

##### Lean NO<sub>x</sub> trap

eg. Jetta, Golf  
Uses alkaline or rare earth oxides to grab nitrogen oxides and form nitrates  
Injects fuel to clear the system  
**Main cost:** Installation, increased fuel consumption

##### Selective catalytic reduction

eg. Passat, Touareg  
Injects urea to exhaust stream to create CO<sub>2</sub> and ammonia  
Ammonia reacts with NO<sub>x</sub> to form water and nitrogen  
**Main cost:** Higher engineering cost in setting up the urea delivery system, storage tank

Source: USEPA/Autonetnews.com/ACD/Car7/truffle.com/livescience.com/cheesistryworld/Compoundchem.com

AFP

Graphic on nitrogen oxide control in diesel engine exhaust systems

Separately, VW Korea President Thomas Kuehl was also due to be grilled in the South Korean parliament Thursday afternoon, according to state broadcaster KBS.

"I sincerely apologize over betraying customers' trust", Volkswagen Korea President Thomas Kuehl said in a newspaper advertisement in South Korea.

## 'Systematic cheating'

At home in Germany, Volkswagen's new chief Matthias Mueller has said four employees have been suspended over the deception, adding however that he did not believe that top management could have been aware of the scam.

Mueller said in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung that "four people, including three responsible directors on different levels of the development of Volkswagen engines," had been suspended over the deception, adding that "others were already on partial retirement".

He said however that the development of an engine is "a complex process" but that these were tasks in which "a director is not directly involved".

"Do you really think that a boss would have the time to be concerned about the details of engine software?" he said.

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