

US approves fix for some Volkswagen diesels

January 6 2017, by Dee-Ann Durbin

Volkswagen will soon be able to repair some of its diesel cars so they meet U.S. emissions standards.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Air Resources Board said Friday that they have approved a fix for around 67,000 of the 475,000 Volkswagens and Audis with 2-liter diesel engines that were programmed to cheat on U.S. emissions tests.

The German automaker acknowledged the cheating in 2015.

The remedy will fix 2015 models of the Volkswagen Beetle, Beetle Convertible, Golf, Golf SportWagen, Jetta and Passat as well as the Audi A3. The EPA and Volkswagen say the fix won't affect the cars' fuel economy, reliability or driving characteristics.

Volkswagen says 58,000 of those vehicles are in the hands of customers and 9,000 are at dealerships. Under the agreement announced Friday, Volkswagen has 10 days to notify affected owners about the fix.

The remedy won't apply to older Volkswagen and Audi models which date to 2009. Volkswagen has submitted fixes for those models, but the EPA and CARB haven't yet approved them. It also doesn't apply to 3-liter diesel engines, which are part of a separate settlement.

Volkswagen will reprogram the cars' software immediately. In about a year, the company will install hardware on the cars, including a diesel particulate filter.

The fix is part of a \$15 billion settlement approved by a federal judge in October. Under the settlement, Volkswagen owners and leaseholders were given the choice between selling their cars back to Volkswagen or having them repaired by the company. Volkswagen also agreed to pay owners up to \$10,000 depending on the age of their cars.

Volkswagen had bought back more than 36,000 cars as of Jan. 3. It had also scheduled 130,000 appointments for future buybacks.

Volkswagen acknowledged in 2015 that diesels sold in the U.S. had software that recognized when the cars were being tested on a treadmill and turned on pollution controls. The controls were turned off when the cars returned to the road. The EPA alleged the scheme let the cars spew up to 40 times the allowable limit of nitrogen oxide, which can cause respiratory problems in humans.

Late last month, Volkswagen and the EPA agreed on a separate settlement for owners of 80,000 3-liter [diesel engines](#) in Volkswagen, Audi and Porsche vehicles. The \$1 billion settlement gives owners of 20,000 of those cars and SUVs the choice of a buyback. Volkswagen believes it can repair the other 60,000 vehicles, so a buyback won't be offered. Customers will also get additional compensation, but those details are still being worked out.

Volkswagen also faces a separate criminal investigation by the U.S. Justice Department.

Volkswagen's U.S. sales plummeted after the cheating admission. Volkswagen brand sales fell 8 percent in 2016; overall industry sales were flat. But Audi sales were less affected, rising 4 percent for the year.

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