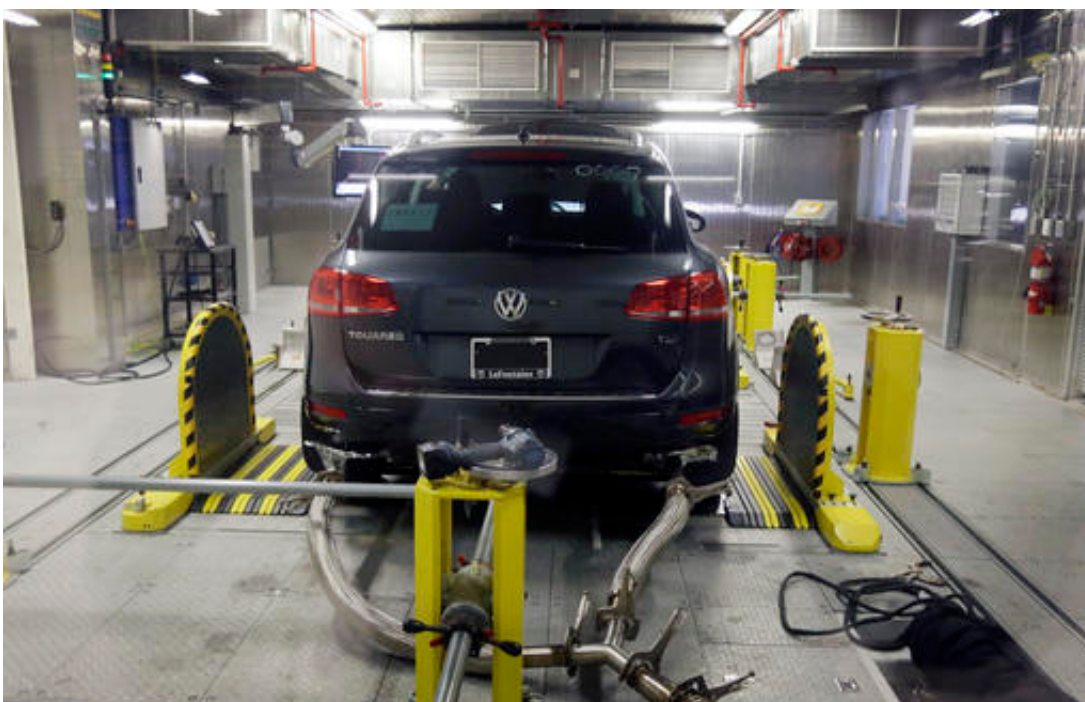


VW pleads guilty in emissions scandal; six employees indicted

January 11 2017, by Michael Biesecker, Tom Krisher And Dee-Ann Durbin



In this Oct. 13, 2015, file photo, a Volkswagen Touareg diesel is tested in the Environmental Protection Agency's cold temperature test facility in Ann Arbor, Mich. The imminent criminal plea deal between Volkswagen and U.S. prosecutors in an emissions-cheating scandal could be bad news for one group of people: VW employees who had a role in the deceit or subsequent cover-up. VW on Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2017, disclosed that it is in advanced talks to settle the criminal case by pleading guilty to unspecified charges and paying \$4.3 billion in criminal and civil fines, a sum far larger than any recent case involving the auto industry. (AP Photo/Carlos Osorio, File)

Six high-level Volkswagen employees have been indicted by a grand jury in the company's diesel emissions cheating scandal, as the company admitted wrongdoing and agreed to pay a record \$4.3 billion penalty.

The federal indictments and plea deal were announced Wednesday by the Justice Department in Washington involving the pollution violation and an elaborate and wide-ranging scheme to cover it up.

It's the largest penalty ever levied by the government against an automaker.

VW installed software into diesel engines on some vehicles that allowed the engines to turn on pollution controls during government tests and switch them off in real-world driving. The software, called a "defeat device" because it defeated the emissions controls, improved engine performance but spewed out harmful nitrogen oxide at up to 40 times above the legal limit.

Regulators confronted VW employees about the use of the software in the summer of 2015. Volkswagen at first denied using the defeat advice, but finally admitted to it in September of that year.

At a press conference Wednesday, Attorney General Loretta Lynch said "Volkswagen obfuscated, they denied and they ultimately lied."

The deal also requires VW to cooperate in an ongoing probe that could lead to the arrest of more employees.



This undated photo provided by the Broward County Sheriff's Office shows Oliver Schmidt under arrest on Jan. 7, 2017. Schmidt, the general manager of the engineering and environmental office for Volkswagen America, was arrested in connection with the company's emissions-cheating scandal. (Broward County Sheriff's Office via AP, File)

Government documents accuse six VW supervisors of lying to environmental regulators or destroying computer files containing evidence.

VW has agreed to the appointment of an independent monitor to oversee compliance and control measures for three years.

Volkswagen previously reached a \$15 billion civil settlement with environmental authorities and car owners in the U.S. under which it agreed to buy back up to 500,000 vehicles. The company also faces an investor lawsuit and criminal probe in Germany. In all, some 11 million vehicles worldwide were equipped with the software.



In this Sept. 21, 2015, file photo, a Volkswagen logo is seen on car offered for sale at New Century Volkswagen dealership in Glendale, Calif. The Volkswagen executive, Oliver Schmidt, who once was in charge of complying with U.S. emissions regulations has been arrested in connection with the company's emissions-cheating scandal, a person briefed on the matter said Monday, Jan. 9, 2017. (AP Photo/Damian Dovarganes, File)

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