

372,000 German drivers join legal action against Volkswagen

January 3 2019



VW, which admitted in 2015 to manipulating 11 million diesel vehicles to appear less polluting under test conditions than in real driving, now faces a collective lawsuit by 372,000 customers in Germany

Some 372,000 German owners of Volkswagen cars fitted with motors that cheated emissions tests have joined a collective legal action against

the auto giant, official figures showed Thursday.

Hundreds of thousands of people signed up to the [collective action](#) between late November and January 2, a spokeswoman for the Federal Office of Justice told AFP.

German consumers' association VZBV filed its request with a court in Brunswick—just a few kilometres (miles) from Volkswagen's Wolfsburg HQ—on November 1.

Although the register is open until the day before the first hearing, planned for later this year, VZBV encouraged car owners to register before December 31 to avoid their case stumbling on the three-year statute of limitations.

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November saw a law providing for a new form of collective legal action enter into force, voted through by MPs after the so-called "dieselgate" scandal came to light.

In the first major consumer case against VW related to its sprawling history of diesel cheating, claimants want to establish that the firm deliberately harmed customers by installing the cheating software in their vehicles—and that it owes them [compensation](#).

If judges rule in favour of the plaintiffs in a test case, the floodgates could be opened for the rest to claim compensation.

VW has always insisted the claims are "baseless".

So far "dieselgate" has cost VW more than 28 billion euros (\$32 billion)

in fines, recalls and compensation.

But most of the financial pain has come in the United States, where VW has not only bought back almost half a million cars from customers but paid up to \$10,000 per vehicle in compensation.

Meanwhile in Germany, the company has paid two fines totalling just 1.8 billion euros.

It hopes to satisfy drivers with software updates for the affected cars and trade-in discounts for people upgrading to a newer, cleaner model.

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