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1. Volkswagen emissions scandal spreads to Europe and threatens to embroil more models and rival carmakers; Exclusive: The Independent can reveal that the EA189 engines at the centre of the scandal had also been fitted to several Skoda and Seat models sold in the UK

Volkswagen emissions scandal spreads to Europe and threatens to embroil more models and rival carmakers; Exclusive: The Independent can reveal that the EA189 engines at the centre of the scandal had also been fitted to several Skoda and Seat models sold in the UK

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The  **INDEPENDENT**

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Body

The Volkswagen and Audi diesel emissions scandal which has thrown the global car industry into turmoil has spread to Europe and threatens to embroil more models and rival carmakers.

The chief executive of Volkswagen AG, the parent company of Porsche, Seat, Skoda, Bentley, Lamborghini and Bugatti as well as VW and Audi, was fighting for his career, after it emerged the firm had fitted 11m vehicles worldwide with a "defeat device" designed to cheat emissions tests.

The Independent can reveal that the EA189 engines at the centre of the emissions scandal had also been fitted to several Skoda and Seat models sold in the UK, as well as the VW Jetta, Beetle, Golf and Passat models and the Audi A3 at the centre of the scandal in the US.

According to a source at VW in the UK the firm is rushing to establish the number of models involved. They said: "We are currently investigating which models are affected and what this means for UK [and European] customers," they said.

This came after the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which has recalled nearly 500,000 cars in US, said it was considering expanding its review of the car giant to cover a range of luxury models manufactured by VW, including the high-end Porsche Cayenne SUV and the Audi Q5, A6, A7 and A8 models.

By the afternoon of 22 September, the scandal, which originated in California on 18 September, had spread across Europe and in Britain the Department for Transport called for an EU-wide investigation. "It's vital that the public has confidence in vehicle emissions tests and I am calling for the European Commission to investigate this issue as a matter of urgency," Transport Secretary Patrick McLoughlin said.

Business news in pictures

A spokesman for the commission said it was "premature" to comment on whether there would be a European investigation into VW, which is the largest carmaker in the EU and a central pillar of the German economy.

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The world's largest car makers is now facing a major criminal probe by US Justice Department and could face up to £11.7bn in fines under an EPA probe set up last week.

The British call for an EU-wide investigation and the revelation that more vehicles could be affected came after German Chancellor Angela Merkel demanded "full transparency" and regulators from Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Czech Republic and the Netherlands have all either launched formal investigations or expressed alarm.

In a video statement posted online, VW chief executive Martin Winterkorn apologised for the scandal, only hours after the firm was forced to deny reports that he would be stepping down on 18 September. He said: "Swift and comprehensive clarification has now the utmost priority. To make it very clear: manipulation at VW must never happen again."

He was speaking after the firm admitted it had already set aside £4.7bn for product recalls as its shares dropped by almost 20 per cent on 22 September. Since Monday £18bn, or a third, has been wiped off the value of the car giant.

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The fate of the 68-year-old chief executive will be on the agenda at a meeting of VW's supervisory governing committee on Tuesday.. Any recommendation that committee makes will be presented to the full 20-member VW board due to meet at a later date.

The revelation was one factor in a market slump as investors feared the scandal could spread beyond VW, amid suggestions the firm had used a software fix to avoid a costly engineering fix for its dirty diesel engines.

Environmental campaigners have long been critical of Germany's enforcement standards on the big car makers that drive its export economy. The EU has been working to tighten testing rules but has been battled by manufactures that are known to manipulate existing tests.

In a statement the carmaker maintained that all new diesel vehicles available in the EU "comply with legal requirement and environmental standards."

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