

Takata Execs Will See Jail Time for Parts Price Fixing

CLEVELAND (AP) – Three executives in Japan's automotive parts industry have agreed to plead guilty to a price-fixing conspiracy and two more have been indicted in the U.S. investigation, government officials said last week.

The plea agreements filed in Detroit and the indictment filed in Toledo were announced by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The Justice Department said Yasuhiko Ueno, Saburo Imamiya and Yoshinobu Fujino, all executives of Tokyo-based Takata Corp., agreed to plead guilty to charges of participating in a conspiracy to rig prices for seatbelts sold to Toyota Motor Corp., Honda Motor Co. Ltd., Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., Fuji Heavy Industries Inc. (Subaru) and Mazda Motor Corp. in the U.S. and elsewhere.

The three have agreed to serve prison sentences ranging from 14 to 19 months, government officials said.

The indictment filed in Toledo charged Masao Hayashi and Kenya Nonoyama, both Japanese nationals, with participating in a conspiracy to fix prices of anti-vibration rubber parts sold to Toyota for installation in automobiles manufactured and sold in the U.S.

Their company was identified in the indictment only as Company A, based in Osaka, Japan.

Takata said it has cooperated in the investigation.

"We are committed to strengthening our reputation as a trusted supplier of automotive parts while also focusing on additional training internally," communications vice president Alby Berman said in an email. No attorneys are listed in court records for the defendants.

The car takes over the driving and, without you touching the wheel, the car is parked.

Adaptive steering makes steering at low speeds much easier.

A collision avoidance system reduces highway crashes.

All these and more driving technologies were introduced at the L.A. Auto Show when Ford unveiled the Ford Edge Concept Nov. 20.

The parking feature can be operated by push-button remotely from either inside or outside the vehicle.

"The original Ford Edge offered customers in North America a fresh, compelling choice for an accommodating, efficient and safe medium utility vehicle," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford executive vice president and president of The Americas.

"The next-generation Edge – previewed in the Ford Edge Concept – will build on these cornerstones to create a global vehicle with technology to make life easier, and design and craftsmanship to appeal to customers around the globe."

Key attributes of the Ford Edge Concept, Hinrichs said, include a "sleek, sporty appearance; fuel efficiency; and technology that assists the driver" and are in line with what customers value around the world, which is driving global growth in the utility vehicle segment.

Data provided by IHS Automotive indicate global utility vehicle sales grew 45 percent between 2007 and 2012. The utility segment now accounts for more than 13 million sales annually – 17 percent of the global automotive market.

The current Ford Edge remains a segment sales leader in the United States, Hinrichs said. Edge is especially well-received in Southern California, where it accounts for nearly one in four sales this year of five-passenger medium utility vehicles.

With market share of 23 percent, Ford Edge is the best-selling five-passenger utility vehicle in Southern California, according to Ford analysis of retail registration data from R.L. Polk.

Moreover, U.S. Ford-brand utility sales overall are up 12 percent through October, Hinrichs said,

Ford Edge Concept Reveals Helpful Technology Aids



Ford Edge Concept

parking space using ultrasonic sensors.

From inside, the driver pushes a button to activate the system; from outside the vehicle, the fully assisted parking aid can be remotely activated, allowing customers to wait until the vehicle has pulled out of a tight parking spot before entering.

Using similar sensor and automated vehicle control technology, Ford has also begun a research project designed to refine advanced obstacle avoidance systems, Nair said.

In this case, the research and development vehicle is able to issue warnings if it detects slow-moving or stationary obstacles in the same lane ahead. If the driver fails to steer or brake following the warnings, the system will automatically steer and brake the vehicle to avoid a collision.

Adaptive steering, another new technology from Ford featured on Edge Concept, makes steering at low speeds dramatically easier, and steering in all conditions feel more confident and engaging, Nair said.

The technology, which builds on Ford's electric power-assisted steering system, controls the relationship between how much the driver turns the wheel and how much the road wheels turn.

compared with last year, and Ford utility vehicles will be America's best-selling utility brand for three straight years in 2013, as it is outpacing the nearest competitor by 32 percent through October.

Driver-assist technologies and semi-automated features in the Edge Concept hint at a future offering even more intelligent and capable vehicles from Ford, Hinrichs said.

These sensor-based technologies form the building blocks for the future of automated driving, and will help make driving safer and more efficient, he added.

"The rate of change in vehicle technology right now is unprecedented," noted Raj Nair, Ford

group vice president of Global Product Development.

"Our engineers around the world are advancing the systems that will ultimately help make drivers smarter, safer and more efficient.

"From advanced engine systems to collision avoidance and automated driving systems, Ford will continue to lead in delivering the technologies consumers want and need."

Fully assisted parking aid, a prototype technology, lets customers park their vehicles at the touch of a button, or even by remote control, Nair said.

The concept builds on Ford's current active park assist feature. It can find a perpendicular

F-150 Pickups with CNG Are on Their Way to Dealerships

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tomers have been asking Ford to make F-150 available with CNG capability to take advantage of the fuel's low price and clean emissions," said Jon Coleman, Ford fleet sustainability and technology manager.

CNG/LPG engine prep from the factory costs \$315 before the customer chooses a Ford Qualified Vehicle Modifier to supply fuel tanks, fuel lines and unique fuel injectors, Hall said. Upfits run approximately \$6,000 to \$9,500 depending on fuel tank capacity.

CNG conversions can provide stability against fluctuating fuel prices as well as lower vehicle operating costs for fleet administrators, Coleman said.

CNG sells for an average of \$2.10 per gallon of gasoline equivalent, and is as low as \$1 in some parts of the country, representing a significant savings over unleaded regular fuel. The national average for unleaded regular fuel near the end of November was \$3.29 per gallon.

Customers also can accelerate

the payback period by taking advantage of a growing number of state incentives, Hall said. Nearly 20 states – including Oklahoma, Texas, Pennsylvania and Florida – offer or soon will provide tax incentives or rebates for CNG-converted vehicles. In Florida, fleet customers will be eligible for rebates of up to \$25,000 beginning in 2014.

By next summer, Ford will offer eight commercial vehicles with a gaseous-prep option, a number no other full-line manufacturer can match, Hall said:

- Transit Connect van and wagon;
- Transit van, wagon, cutaway and chassis cab;
- E-Series van, wagon, cutaway and stripped chassis;
- F-Series Super Duty pickup and F-350 chassis cab;
- F-Series Super Duty chassis cab (F-450, F-550);
- F-650 medium-duty truck;
- F53 and F59 stripped chassis;
- 2014 F-150 light-duty pickup.

Customers are responding to this array of choices, Hall said. Since reintroducing the option in

2009, Ford has established itself as the leader in CNG/LPG engine sales. The company is on pace to sell more than 15,000 CNG/LPG-prepped vehicles this year, an increase of more than 25 percent from 2012.

Hall said AT&T is one of many Ford fleet customers that are finding value in CNG. The communications giant recently purchased 650 F-350 chassis cabs with the CNG-prep option.

"We're almost halfway to our company-wide goal of deploying 15,000 alternative-fuel vehicles by the end of 2018," said Jerome Webber, AT&T vice president, Global Fleet Operations. "Vehicles such as CNG F-350s from Ford have helped us avoid purchasing 7.7 million gallons of gasoline over the past five years while reducing our fleet's emissions."

Ford has established a rigorous qualification program for alternative-fuel vehicle modifiers, Hall said. The Qualified Vehicle Modifier (QVM) program is intended to help modifiers achieve greater levels of customer satisfaction and product acceptance.

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