

VW's former CEO to stand trial over 'dieselgate'

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The 'dieselgate' emissions cheating scandal has been dogging VW since 2015

Volkswagen's former chief executive Martin Winterkorn will stand trial over the car giant's massive "dieselgate" scam, a German court said Wednesday, five years after the scandal rocked the automobile industry.

"The chamber has determined that there is sufficient suspicion, that is, an overwhelming possibility of conviction, of the accused Professor Doctor Winterkorn for commercial and organised fraud," said the court in Brunswick in a statement.

Winterkorn, 73, will stand trial with four other former colleagues, who are also accused of fraud, as well as serious tax evasion and fraudulent advertising.

Volkswagen sank into a tangle of legal problems over its stunning revelation in September 2015 that it had installed devices in 11 million diesel vehicles worldwide to make them seem less polluting in lab tests than they actually were on the road.

Winterkorn resigned days after the revelations while denying any personal wrongdoing.

The "dieselgate" cheating scandal plunged one of the main pillars of German industry into the biggest crisis in its history.

But the VW group had in May put to bed one of the most potentially damaging cases, by paying nine million euros (\$10.6 million) in an out-of-court settlement to prevent its two current bosses going to trial over market manipulation charges.

The German car giant's chief executive Herbert Diess and supervisory board chief Hans Dieter Poetsch had faced charges for allegedly failing to inform shareholders in a timely manner about the pollution cheating scandal.

'Mr Quality'

Winterkorn however still faces charges over market manipulation, which

would come on top of this upcoming Brunswick fraud trial.



Martin Winterkorn has repeatedly denied knowing of diesel cheating despite claiming to remember 'every screw' in VW's cars

Volkswagen told AFP in a statement that the [court decision](#) to head for trial concerns "specific individuals" and that it was "in the interest of the group, its employees and shareholders that light be shed on the facts" that sparked dieselgate.

Winterkorn's trial will not be the first targeting former top executives at the sprawling Volkswagen group, which includes brands like Skoda, Seat, Porsche and Audi.

Audi's former chief executive Rupert Stadler will be tried later in September on fraud charges.

Winterkorn's case will be keenly watched for hints on which executives were directly responsible for the huge scam.

A fastidious perfectionist with the nickname "Mr Quality", Winterkorn once boasted he knew "every screw in our cars".

Nevertheless, Volkswagen has always insisted that only a handful of engineers came up with the international emissions trickery without the knowledge of their superiors.

The group admitted in 2016 that Winterkorn was sent a "memo" in May 2014 about emission irregularities recorded in the United States, where the scam was first exposed. But VW could not confirm if he had read it.

The dieselgate scandal shook Volkswagen to its foundations, and with it Germany's flagship car sector, which employs around 800,000 people.

The saga has already cost VW more than 30 billion euros in fines, legal costs and compensation payments to car owners—the vast majority in the United States.

In late April, the group settled Germany's biggest lawsuit in an out-of-[court settlement](#) in which it agreed to pay around 750 million euros in compensation to some 235,000 customers, or between 1,350 and 6,250 euros per car.

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