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MASS SEIZURE BY CUSTOMS AUTHORITIES OF COUNTERFEIT GOODS AT AUTOMECHANIKA

reported by Jürgen Strass

The representatives of renowned European automotive suppliers could hardly believe their eyes when they watched as patent attorneys Jürgen Strass and Dr. Bernhard Pfeleiderer of the Munich patent law firm Prinz & Partner pulled whole bagfuls of counterfeit windscreen wipers from hidden corners of the stands of Chinese and Taiwanese exhibitors at Automechanika in Frankfurt.

A leading French automotive supplier had German customs seize imitated windscreen wipers and packaging at as many as eight different stands. This means that all companies that had been assessed as being suspect beforehand were found with counterfeit goods.

While at the IAA trade fair last year the two patent attorneys were the only ones present in order to detect imitations, as many as 25 companies had already registered to participate in this years Automechanika seizure actions with the customs authorities mobile control group. In addition to numerous windscreen wipers, customs also seized sizeable amounts of intellectual property rights infringing oil filters and brakes. The infringers this year came not only from China, but also from Taiwan, South Korea and Russia.

As original product manufacturers warn consumers, imitated products of inferior quality often constitute a considerable safety risk. Apart from the specific financial damage, the original product manufacturers reputations are also impaired to a

considerable extent since some of the poor quality products are mistaken for original goods.

The patent attorneys of Prinz & Partner had a special surprise in store for two repeat offenders from Taiwan: the product pirates were presented with final judgments passed by French courts for patent infringement. Since the product pirates had failed to satisfy claims for damages arising from the proceedings in France, their stands were first searched by customs for counterfeit products and, at the request of the original product manufacturer, were seized complete with all the goods a short time later. For these companies, the trade fair was already over on the second day. "We can have the goods of such repeat offenders seized again at every trade fair in Europe over the next 30 years", explained patent attorney Dr. Bernhard Pfeleiderer. But fortunately, irrespective of this, for the first time the customs mobile control group gives us a tool to proceed systematically and effectively against the ever more brazen product pirates from non-EU countries."

QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions regarding this topic, please feel free to get in touch with your personal contact or Jürgen Strass at j.strass@prinz.eu.

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