

**Opening Statement of Ranking Member Diana DeGette
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
Hearing on “Volkswagen Emissions Cheating Allegations: Initial Questions”
October 8, 2015**

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this important hearing.

Here is what we know so far:

We know that in May 2014, West Virginia University published a study commissioned by the International Council on Clean Transportation that found that the on-road emissions from Volkswagen’s cars were well above EPA standards. They also did not match the emissions outputs found under testing conditions.

We know that VW tried to justify this discrepancy to regulators with explanations of technical issues and unexpected in-use conditions.

We know that in December 2014, VW initiated a voluntary recall of nearly 500,000 vehicles to resolve, among other things, the emissions issues. Yet, when the California Air Resources Board tested the “fixed” vehicles, they found that the emissions were still far above the legal standards.

We know that by July of this year, EPA and CARB told VW that they would not approve the company’s 2016 model year diesel vehicles for sale unless these emissions issues could be explained.

VW was forced to come clean, and they ultimately confessed that they had installed a “defeat device” in their diesel cars designed to circumvent EPA emissions standards for certain air pollutants.

We know that this defeat device “sensed” when the vehicles were undergoing emissions testing and ensured emissions control systems were operating to pass. We know that during normal road use, the emissions controls were reduced and that the cars were producing up to 40 times more nitrogen oxide than is allowed by emissions standards.

We know that almost half a million cars in the United States may be affected.

VW hasn’t revealed how the defeat device affects the engine, why it was installed, and how it was able to evade emissions tests.

You haven’t revealed when and how the engines equipped with this defeat device will be fixed. And you haven’t told us whether that fix will affect the fuel economy or performance of the vehicles.

You haven’t revealed what Volkswagen told regulators over the last year as EPA and CARB were trying to figure out why these vehicle’s emissions were out of compliance.

You haven't revealed whether the voluntary recall that VW set in place in 2014 was really a ruse. Was VW Group of America actually trying to find out what was wrong with the cars and fix them, or did VW know that the cars had defeat devices on them and were only trying to buy time with the regulators?

You haven't revealed who is responsible for this scheme. We don't know who knew about it in Germany and who knew about it in the United States.

We have all seen press reports and we can speculate about what happened here and why. But until Volkswagen comes forward with some answers – and provides some assurances that we can trust what they're saying – the American people, the regulators, and Congress are left in the dark. So Mr. Horn, I hope you have come prepared to answer some of these questions today.

Hundreds of thousands of owners invested money and trust in VW. Many bought them seeking environmentally friendly vehicles.

Now they are left with cars belching much higher levels of pollution. They don't have any answers about when or how their car will be fixed or what kind of car they will be left with.

Earlier this week, I visited a Volkswagen dealership in Denver. I saw the pollution control equipment on VW diesel vehicles firsthand. These cars account for a significant percentage of sales at VW dealerships in Colorado. Now, scores of these cars are just sitting on lots -- a scene repeated across the country.

Mr. Horn, I hope you have answers for drivers and for dealers about what they should do with these cars moving forward.

Mr. Chairman, this subcommittee has been here before. In the last fifteen years, we have hauled Ford and Firestone, Toyota, GM, and Takata before this Committee. We were able to get information from all those companies to help us understand what happened in their vehicles. But more importantly, we have used this information to chart a path forward and help the consumers affected by these events.

I hope that Volkswagen can similarly tell us today what is happening in their diesel cars and how they intend to fix it.

Volkswagen made a series of terrible decisions and has broken the public trust. Today, we need some answers so we can ensure that this will never happen again.