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Struggle continues for automakers to develop effective countermeasures to meet evolving vehicle emission standards

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On May 7, authorities fined German luxury carmaker Porsche AG EUR 535 million (USD 598 million) for cheating on diesel emissions tests. The fine brings the investigations into Porsche to an end, and is the last of a series of probes into its parent company, Volkswagen (VW).

Another VW unit, Audi, agreed to pay a fine of EUR 800 million last autumn for installing illegal software in certain automobiles to manipulate emissions measurements. Following this latest ruling against Porsche, investigations will now focus on high-level executives of VW, and on recouping money for investors and others who lost big when VW's share price plummeted. VW has paid an approximate EUR 30 billion in fines and penalties since 2015, after U.S. authorities disclosed systematic emissions cheating.

Since the disclosure in 2015 of VW's use of "defeat devices" to get around emission testing equipment, several major automakers have been investigated or have come forward to report emissions violations. Japanese automakers Nissan Motor Co. Ltd., and Subaru Corporation both faced emissions issues last year, and Fiat Chrysler reached a settlement in January with the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the state of California for alleged violations of the Clean Air Act and California law. Fiat is also required to "implement corporate governance, organizational and technical process reforms to minimize the likelihood of future Clean Air Act violations, and to hire a compliance auditor for three years to oversee and assess the effectiveness of these reforms," according to the settlement.