

## 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.

## Ford Edge Concept Reveals Helpful Technology Aids

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



Ford Edge Concept

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, 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 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.

This means that low-speed steering – such as pulling into or out of a parking space – requires much less turning of the wheel.

“The Ford Edge Concept is the latest example of a utility vehicle that delivers the attributes global customers value most – design, fuel efficiency, driving dynamics, and customer-focused technology to help the driver feel more confident,” said Hinrichs.

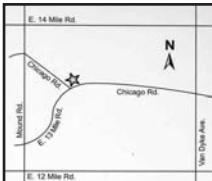
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