



# Department of Justice

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## **DENSO CORPORATION EXECUTIVE AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO PRICE FIXING AND BID RIGGING ON AUTO PARTS INSTALLED IN U.S. CARS**

### *Executive Also Agrees to Serve Significant Prison Time*

WASHINGTON – An executive of Japan-based DENSO Corporation, has agreed to plead guilty and to serve time in prison for his role in a conspiracy to fix prices and rig bids for heater control panels (HCPs) installed in U.S. cars, the Department of Justice announced today.

According to a one-count felony charge filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in Detroit, Norihiro Imai, a Japanese national, along with co-conspirators, engaged in a conspiracy to rig bids for and to fix, stabilize and maintain the prices of HCPs sold to customers in the United States and elsewhere. According to the charge, Imai's involvement in the conspiracy lasted from at least as early as August 2006 until at least June 2009. According to the plea agreement, which is subject to court approval, Imai has agreed to serve one year and one day in a U.S. prison, to pay a \$20,000 criminal fine and to cooperate with the department's ongoing investigation.

"Today's guilty plea demonstrates the Antitrust Division's commitment to hold executives accountable for engaging in illegal conduct that leads to higher prices for American businesses and consumers," said Acting Assistant Attorney General Sharis A. Pozen in charge of the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division. "Criminal antitrust enforcement is a top priority, and the division will continue to work with its law enforcement partners in the ongoing investigation in the auto parts industry."

DENSO manufactures and sells a variety of automotive electrical parts, including HCPs. HCPs are located in the center console of an automobile and control the temperature of the interior environment of a vehicle. According to the charge, Imai and his co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy by, among other things, agreeing during meetings and discussions to coordinate bids submitted to, and price adjustments requested by, automobile manufacturers.

Including Imai, eight individuals and three companies have been charged in the government's ongoing investigation into price fixing and bid rigging in the auto parts industry. DENSO pleaded guilty on March 5, 2012, and was sentenced to pay a \$78 million criminal fine. Yazaki Corporation, another Japanese automotive electrical component supplier, pleaded guilty on March 1, 2012, and was sentenced to pay a \$470 million criminal fine. Additionally, four Yazaki executives were charged on Jan. 30, 2012, and have agreed to plead guilty. On Nov. 14,

2011, Furukawa Electric Co. Ltd. pleaded guilty and was sentenced to pay a \$200 million fine. Three of Furukawa's executives also pleaded guilty and were sentenced to serve prison sentences in the United States ranging from a year and a day to 18 months.

Imai is charged with price fixing in violation of the Sherman Act, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison and a \$1 million criminal fine for individuals. The maximum fine for an individual may be increased to twice the gain derived from the crime or twice the loss suffered by the victims of the crime, if either of those amounts is greater than the statutory maximum fine.

The current prosecution arose from an ongoing federal antitrust investigation into price fixing, bid rigging and other anticompetitive conduct in the automotive parts industry, which is being conducted by the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section and the FBI's Detroit Field Office with the assistance of the FBI headquarters' International Corruption Unit. Anyone with information concerning the focus of this investigation is urged to call the Antitrust Division's National Criminal Enforcement Section at 202-307-6694, visit [www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.htm](http://www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.htm) or call the FBI's Detroit Field Office at 313-965-2323.

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