



Department of Justice

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BRIDGESTONE CORP. AGREES TO PLEAD GUILTY TO PRICE FIXING ON AUTOMOBILE PARTS INSTALLED IN U.S. CARS

Company Agrees to Pay \$425 Million Criminal Fine

WASHINGTON — Bridgestone Corp., a Tokyo, Japan-based company, has agreed to plead guilty and to pay a \$425 million criminal fine for its role in a conspiracy to fix prices of automotive anti-vibration rubber parts installed in cars sold in the United States and elsewhere, the Department of Justice announced today.

According to a one-count felony charge filed today in U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Ohio in Toledo, Bridgestone engaged in a conspiracy to allocate sales of, to rig bids for and to fix, raise and maintain the prices of automotive anti-vibration rubber parts it sold to Toyota Motor Corp., Nissan Motor Corp., Fuji Heavy Industries Ltd., Suzuki Motor Corp., Isuzu Motors Ltd. and certain of their subsidiaries, affiliates and suppliers, in the United States and elsewhere. In addition to the criminal fine, Bridgestone also has agreed to cooperate with the department's ongoing auto parts investigations. The plea agreement is subject to court approval.

In October 2011, Bridgestone pleaded guilty and paid a \$28 million fine for price-fixing and Foreign Corrupt Practices Act violations in the marine hose industry, but did not disclose at the time of the plea that it had also participated in the anti-vibration rubber parts conspiracy. Bridgestone's failure to disclose this conspiracy was a factor in determining the \$425 million fine.

"The Antitrust Division will take a hard line when repeat offenders fail to disclose additional anticompetitive behavior," said Brent Snyder, Deputy Assistant Attorney General for the Antitrust Division's criminal enforcement program. "Today's significant fine reaffirms the division's commitment to holding companies accountable for conduct that harms U.S. consumers."

According to the charges, Bridgestone and its co-conspirators carried out the conspiracy through meetings and conversations in which they discussed and agreed upon bids, prices and allocating sales of certain automotive anti-vibration rubber products. After exchanging this information with its co-conspirators, Bridgestone submitted bids and prices in accordance with those agreements and sold and accepted payments for automotive anti-vibration rubber parts at

collusive and noncompetitive prices. Bridgestone's involvement in the conspiracy to fix prices of anti-vibration rubber parts lasted from at least January 2001 until at least December 2008.

"The Cleveland Division of the FBI is committed to aggressively investigating price-fixing and other antitrust violations," said Special Agent in Charge Stephen D. Anthony. "The illegal activity in this case threatened the basic tenet of free competition. We are pleased with the acceptance of responsibility along with the significant penalty which will be paid by Bridgestone for this conspiracy to fix prices. Together with our partners in the Department of Justice's Antitrust Division, we will continue to combat illegal practices which threaten consumers across the United States."

Bridgestone manufactures and sells a variety of automotive parts, including anti-vibration rubber parts, which are comprised primarily of rubber and metal, and are installed in suspension systems and engine mounts as well as other parts of an automobile. They are installed in automobiles for the purpose of reducing road and engine vibration.

Including Bridgestone, 26 companies have pleaded guilty or agreed to plead guilty in the department's ongoing investigation into price fixing and bid rigging in the automotive parts industry. The companies have agreed to pay a total of more than \$2 billion in criminal fines. Additionally, 28 individuals have been charged.

Bridgestone is charged with price fixing in violation of the Sherman Act, which carries maximum penalties of a \$100 million criminal fine for corporations. The maximum fine 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.

Today's prosecution is the result of an ongoing federal antitrust investigation into price fixing, bid rigging and other anticompetitive conduct in the automotive parts industry, which is being conducted by each of the Antitrust Division's criminal enforcement sections and the FBI. Today's charge was brought by the Antitrust Division's Chicago Office and the FBI's Cleveland Field Office, with the assistance of the FBI headquarters' International Corruption Unit and the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Ohio. Anyone with information concerning this investigation should contact the Antitrust Division's Citizen Complaint Center at 1-888-647-3258, visit www.justice.gov/atr/contact/newcase.html or call the FBI's Cleveland Field Office at 216-522-1400.

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