

Safety-relevant brand protection

Mercedes-Benz has taken on the fight against counterfeiters, in close cooperation with trade supervisory and law enforcement authorities. The focus is on safety-related counterfeits, which can be a danger to all road users if they do not have the quality of genuine parts. For example, in May and June 2023, paper air filters were seized, which can cause serious accidents after installation. Counterfeit brake, wheel, body and steering parts were also seized. All are destroyed after seizure. In 2023 alone, the authorities seized over 1.6 million Mercedes-Benz counterfeits in over 740 raids worldwide. The number of raids increased significantly, by almost 20 percent over the previous year.

“The counterfeiting industry generates enormous margins and has the structures of organized crime, says Renata Jungo Brüngger, member of the Mercedes-Benz Group AG board of management for integrity, governance and sustainability. “It endangers road safety, takes no account of the environment, and stands neither for fair wages nor for occupational safety. There are no quality controls.

“By taking action against these highly criminal structures, consistently and with all legal means, we protect not only the reputation of our brand, but also our customers, other road users and ultimately all victims of the counterfeiting industry.

“In close cooperation with the authorities, we were able to track down many counterfeit factories directly.” In 2023, an average of more than two raids per day took place worldwide.

Raids are often preceded by months of investigation and preparation. The brand protectors at Mercedes-Benz check offers on websites, investigate indications of counterfeiting and conduct intensive research to identify the counterfeiters’ factories. The team makes the results available to the authorities responsible for conducting raids. In order to reliably detect product counterfeits, a trained eye and many years of experience are necessary, because a counterfeit often hardly differs visually from a genuine part. The global Intellectual Property Enforcement Team at Mercedes-Benz are therefore repeatedly called in by authorities to quickly verify counterfeit parts.

Counterfeiting networks are increasingly moving to online platforms and social media to distribute counterfeit products on a large scale. When trading, counterfeiters use the extensive anonymity and decentralized nature of online marketplaces and technologies. Mercedes-Benz is therefore continuously expanding its strategic and operational anti-counterfeiting measures, including in online retail. In 2023, the brand protectors have deleted over 142,000 offers of counterfeit Mercedes-Benz products and content infringing trademark rights.

The brand protection strategy is based on three pillars: tracking down, attacking and preventing. Mercedes-Benz brand protectors regularly support customs authorities and service providers with training events and provide information material to raise awareness.



How to avoid falling for counterfeits

A few simple criteria can help consumers avoid falling for counterfeit products. It starts with the careful examination of conspicuous offers in everyday online life. Typical alarm signals to identify potential counterfeit products include significantly lower prices, abnormalities in product quality or sales via dubious sources. In some cases, it is immediately apparent that the products cannot be genuine by the product images or designations, for example if Mercedes-Benz does not manufacture these products itself. However, the layperson will hardly be able to visually distinguish many of the offers from genuine products. ■

