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Judge OKs \$307.5M car emissions class action settlement

By Carter Stoddard

A federal judge granted final approval of a \$307.5 million class action settlement Thursday that will see some consumers receive software updates to their vehicles, along with cash awards and extended warranties.

The agreement between auto supplier Robert Bosch, Fiat Chrysler and members of the class includes roughly 100,000 owners and lessees of Ram 1500 and Jeep Grand Cherokee 3.0-liter diesel vehicles from model years 2014 to 2016.

“We are pleased the court has granted final approval of this settlement, which will allow consumers to finally receive the vehicle they were promised, plus cash compensation,” said plaintiffs’ counsel Elizabeth J. Cabraser of Lief Cabraser Heimann & Bernstein LLP in a prepared statement.

“This agreement accomplishes our goals of holding FCA and Bosch accountable for their diesel emissions cheating, and of compensating consumers while protecting our environment,” she added.

The decision by U.S. District Judge Edward M. Chen of San Francisco will allow Jeep and Ram drivers to file online claims for service that would improve the emission output of their vehicles.

Most members of the class are expected to receive \$3,075 each, according to a press release from the plaintiffs’ steering committee, which negotiated the settlement for class members.

“Now that the court has granted final approval, eligible class members can begin the claims process. They should visit the settlement website for more information on their benefits and what they need to do to get them,” Cabraser said.

The vehicles named in the settlement used software that caused the autos to “perform differently, and less effectively, during certain normal driving conditions than on federal emission tests, resulting in increased emissions of harmful air pollutants,” according to an Environmental Protection Agency news release in January 2019.

The release said the vehicles in question consequently emitted levels of nitrogen oxides capable of causing respiratory illness, according to the EPA.

“The vehicles will be repaired and class members will be paid just as quickly: The claims process started today,” Cabraser said in an emailed statement.

She added the class action would “serve the public interest, reduce environmental damage, compensate consumers and protect their vehicles.”