

Media Release

Automechanika Leading International Trade Fair for
the Automotive Sector
Johannesburg Expo Centre, 18 - 21 March 2009

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AUTOMECHANIKA SOUTH AFRICA WILL WAGE WAR ON BRAND AND PRODUCT PIRACY

The organisers of Automechanika South Africa, to be held at Expo Centre, Johannesburg on March 18-21, 2009 will be ready to wage war on brand and product piracy at this first local exposure of the famous Automechanika brand.

"This is one of the terms in our contract to stage the event," explained show director Philip Otto.

Brand and product piracy is the name given to trading with copies that are so similar to the originals that they can be confused with them. Illegal copies infringe copyrights, patent rights, trademarks, design patents or registered utility model rights as well as fair competition regulations.

Automechanika is the jewel in the crown of Messe Frankfurt, one of the largest exhibition and trade fair organisers in the world. As such it abides by the "Messe Frankfurt against Copying" initiative that was launched in 2006.

By offering its exhibitors information and support with the systematical assertion of their intellectual property rights, it aims to create a fair business environment that does not countenance imitators.

A total of 253 fake or pirate parts were confiscated at this year's Automechanika trade fair in Frankfurt. Most of them came from Egypt, China, Brazil, Morocco and Korea. In addition, the German customs officials confiscated a further 63 items before they reached the Messe Frankfurt showground, which was a big boost for the campaign against copying.

Trade fairs act as presentation platforms for innovations and trends. As an organiser of trade fairs all over the world Messe Frankfurt has a substantial interest in exhibitors being protected from brand and product piracy as well as in the subsequent legal processes being taken against defaulters.

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Messe Frankfurt has reported a steady decrease in the number of products seized by customs officials at its trade fairs since 2006 – a fall of 90% has been recorded at some individual events.

However, it must be realised that the number of controls has risen significantly over the period as part of this initiative. There has also been a significant rise in the number of intellectual property rights and design patents issued in Germany over the same period.

Messe Frankfurt even goes so far as to prohibit visitors to the show and exhibitors from carrying cameras with them at their shows. Under the slogan “Feel free to collect ideas, but photographing ideas is prohibited”, only Press and official photographers may take photos. Any infringements of this rule, which includes the use of cameras built in to cell phones, results in the security staff impounding the equipment.

Messe Frankfurt, which was the first organiser in the world to publicly address the problem of copying, works closely with official bodies and private initiatives in the protection of intellectual property rights in the automotive industry. These include the German Patent and Trade Mark Office and several other relevant organisations in Germany and Europe.

There is a “Messe Frankfurt against Copying” information booth at most of its events and this will be the case with Automechanika South Africa 2009. Besides being able to supply the informative “Messe Frankfurt against Copying” brochure the booth at Expo Centre will be manned by a person who will be able to assist a complainant who wants to make a case against another exhibitor.

Messe Frankfurt, in conjunction with Microsoft Germany has instituted a competition: “Your ideas count. Nothing is better than the original” to encourage companies and the general public to become more aware of the need to protect intellectual property.

Awards will be made to companies, institutions, organisations, clubs or individual persons who are making outstanding contributions to this fight against brand and product piracy. Information about the competition can be found on the “Messe Frankfurt against Copying” section of www.messefrankfurt.com or on www.microsoft.com/germany/dieidee.

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