

# Dieselgate: A TDI Owner's Perspective

By "Stealth TDI" (September 2015)

News of the TDI emissions scandal broke on Friday, September 18<sup>th</sup>. Here is the [EPA's press release](#). Volkswagen AG (VAG, Germany) issued a statement the same day, but nothing of any value was stated until the following Tuesday. That gave VW owners an entire weekend to ponder how events would unfold.

[TDIclub.com](#) was ablaze with speculation, accusations in nearly every direction, and other rants. [Read here](#) for what's probably the most heated discussion to ever unfold there. Despite statements from both Volkswagen of America (VWOA) and VAG, there are still plenty of unanswered questions, leaving many in the VW community uncertain of the future of their cars and their continued loyalty to Volkswagen. Responses from enthusiasts have varied: "How could VW do this?" "I feel cheated/duped!" "I'm getting rid of my TDI right away. I'm embarrassed to drive it!" "I'm not letting VW touch my car, only to make it perform worse." The list of remarks goes on. Some TDI owners have already traded their cars (at a loss) on other makes, some will wait and see what happens, and others will keep their TDIs no matter what. What's the average TDI owner to do?



I'll not dwell on the specifics of the case, its merit, or the science of it all. Others have done a great job of presenting the material. Here is one of the [best layman's pieces](#) I've read so far. I also really appreciate [this video](#) by "The Humble Mechanic." Instead of discussing technical stuff, I'm going to just share a reaction and some thoughts. First, and most obvious, [VW really screwed up! What VW did was wrong, without a single doubt!](#) Do I feel

cheated or duped? No, not really... not yet... not until I see how VW fixes this. I have two of the affected common-rail TDIs. I bought them because of their advertised power and economy, as well as their smoke-free exhaust. Sure, the economy is lower than with my 1998 first-generation TDI. But the newer cars are also heavier, safer, more powerful, better equipped, and smoke-free. To be honest, I didn't even think of nitrogen oxides (NOx) when I saw the term "clean diesel." Since my old 1998 TDI is a smoker, the clean diesel's total lack of smoke, combined with its increased power and torque, is what really attracted me to the car. The ad above says it all. Oddly enough, the ad makes no claim of being pollution free; only the suggestion that "stinky, smoky, and sluggish[ness]" are a thing of the past. "Clean" was a relative term for this particular shopper. Of course, [VW was completely unethical about allowing and hiding the excessive NOx emissions.](#) But the TDI, as advertised to me, has met my expectations.

An advertisement for the TDI Clean Diesel engine. On the right is a photograph of the engine block, which is black and silver. On the left is text. The headline reads "This ain't your daddy's diesel." Below it, a paragraph says: "Stinky, smoky, and sluggish. Those old diesel realities no longer apply. Enter TDI Clean Diesel. Ultra-low-sulfur fuel, direct injection technology, and extreme efficiency. We've ushered in a new era of diesel." Below that is a bulleted list: "• Engineered to burn low-sulfur diesel fuel" and "• 'Common Rail' direct injection system". At the bottom left, there is a small link: "View key fuel efficiency info."

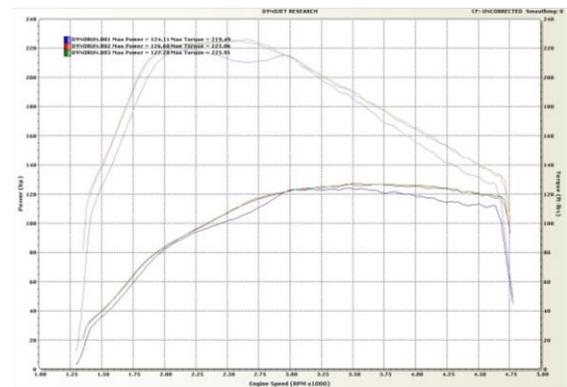
Am I embarrassed to drive my TDI? Not at all. I'm a little irritated, but not embarrassed. One person echoed my sentiment very well when he posted *"This has been, in reality, a GREAT car. I've had less trouble out of it than any other car I've ever owned. Sure, it's pretty expensive to maintain. But I enjoy driving it, sitting in it, looking at it, and bragging on it. Wouldn't hurt my feelings to run it to 200k and beyond."* This person traded his TDI (at a loss) for a Mazda just days after the scandal broke. Although I'm not embarrassed, I am irritated because I've never had to wonder about the future of my car; nor have I felt I was driving an overt symbol of unethical business practice... until now. Now that Dieselgate has happened, I find myself wondering what VW's "fix" will do to my car; whether mileage, power, or reliability will suffer; or whether I will find myself staring at a buyback option that I cannot ignore due to VW's inability to conform to the NOx standard. Resale value is only a small concern for me since I tend to drive my cars until they're not worth much, anyway.



I suspect many of the drivers who are *embarrassed* are smug, environmental types who had been bashing hybrids, gas guzzlers, and other cars that don't meet their own snooty definitions of "economical" or "environmentally-friendly." They had been obnoxious, imposing their "green" views upon those around them, and now they look like fools. Yes, **those** drivers have egg on their face. That **is** embarrassing. Personally, I brag about my fuel economy and how far I can travel between fuel stops, all while still having a car that performs well without emitting smoke. My website asserts that *"the TDI is the best performing economy car available to the average person."* Every now and then, hopefully during a **friendly** conversation about the pros and cons of each car, I comment about the overall "lifecycle" of a hybrid car vs. a conventional car, the idea being that hybrids create more pollution during their production. Read more about that [here](#).



Yes, I will let VW "fix" my car. First, I will measure some performance metrics so I can readily see the outcome, if the change isn't obvious. I have excellent documentation of the car's fuel economy. I've also taken some crude power vs. weight measurements with a smartphone app. I wouldn't consider the measurements to be highly accurate. But they're consistent enough to compare performance from one day to the next. I'll take measurements immediately before and after VW's "fix" and then consider some options if I don't like what I see in the "improved" car.



“What about pollution? Aren’t you concerned about our children and their future?” Sure, I am. However, I’m inclined to note that our 482,000 affected TDIs make up less than 0.2% of the 253-million registered passenger vehicles in the United States, which includes over 19-million heavy trucks, combination vehicles, and motorcycles (*all with different emission standards*). That said, [this article](#) knew I’d say that; it points out a painful reality: “VW fans are being



forced to face the truth, to defend the indefensible. For months, if not years, we’ll wearily answer familiar-yet-fair questions from people who assume that *Volkswagens can’t be trusted, or that “clean diesel” is a sham and a dead end*—a corporate euphemism on par with ‘clean coal.’” I want to say I’m not feeling too badly over this, especially since I routinely find myself behind plenty of smelly gasoline-powered passenger cars, as well as modified diesel pickups that “roll coal.” However, the fact that I’m writing this article means that I think about it enough that maybe I must admit the whole situation bothers me. Damn you, Volkswagen!

I will patiently await Volkswagen’s “fix” and see how I feel about it. If they don’t make it right, these could be my last Volkswagens, after having owned six in my life! Still, I encourage readers to remember that it’s not the Volkswagen owner’s fault that **VW LIED about their emissions controls**. More specifically, **VAG (Germany) LIED**. I’m sure that only a handful of engineers at VAG lied to an allegedly dictator-like CEO (*the CEO prior to the one who just resigned*) to save their jobs. Then the CEO, perhaps not knowing he had been lied to, approved the release of VAG’s flawed product to VWOA. I firmly believe VWOA is blameless in this scandal. And, no matter how much we love to hate them, I absolutely believe VWOA’s dealerships, sales staffs, and mechanics are also blameless. **VAG HOSED US ALL!** I will wait and see what they do to make this right. It’s really the smart move at this point. I have no desire to make a foolish financial decision before knowing all of my options. Even with my options on the table, I’m not falling on my financial sword to preserve the environment. Preserving the environment was Volkswagen’s job. I’ll pay off the cars and move on if I must.



A few TDIClub.com users routinely say, “Drive more, worry less!” For now, I intend to do just that... if I can.