



IPRC CONNECTIONS

Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center

MAY 2019

IPR Center promotes automotive safety as summer driving season approaches



As the summer driving season approaches, the National Intellectual Property Rights Coordination Center (IPR Center) is warning the motoring public about the risks and dangers of counterfeit automotive parts, especially those often available online. The warning comes as millions of motorists prepare for summer travel with a quick visit to the local mechanic.

“There is an active market for counterfeited automotive parts that is trending upward at an alarming rate,” said Steve Francis, IPR Center director. “Our fear is that these parts will not perform as well as authentic parts and that they could lead to catastrophic failure, resulting in potentially fatal consequences.” Francis is also concerned about online sales of counterfeit parts that present potential problems for suppliers.

In addition to counterfeit airbags, other counterfeit parts pose safety risks, including seat belts, oil and air filters, brake pads, brake rotors, control arms, windshields, bearings, steering linkages, spark plugs and wheels.

The IPR Center recently hosted the annual meeting of the Automotive Anti-Counterfeiting Council (A2C2), a non-profit automotive association comprised of representatives from North American vehicle manufacturers. The group remains focused on a variety of issues, including efforts to make it more difficult to sell counterfeit auto parts online. A2C2 is also supporting efforts to enact state laws that make it a crime for anyone to knowingly manufacture, import, sell, install, or reinstall a counterfeit air bag or nonfunctional air bag, or any device that is intended to conceal a counterfeit air bag or nonfunctional air bag, in a motor vehicle. So far, more than 20 states have given the law the green light.

Better Business Bureau releases investigative study on counterfeits

IPR Center Director Steve Francis joined officials from the Better Business Bureau (BBB) in Buffalo, New York for the release of an investigative study on counterfeits entitled “*Fakes Are Not Fashionable: A BBB Study of the Epidemic of Counterfeit Goods Sold Online.*”

“We applaud the BBB for its efforts to help us inform and educate the public about the dangers of counterfeit merchandise and, more importantly, the need to convince consumers to avoid them,” Francis told the BBB gathering in Buffalo. View the study here: [BBB Study](#)



NCFTA plays key role in supporting investigations of counterfeiting and fraud



If you’ve ever wondered how Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) is able to successfully track criminal activity and solve complex cases, look no further than Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. That’s where you will find the National Cyber-Forensics & Training Alliance (NCFTA), a nonprofit partnership between private industry, government, and academia that provides a neutral, trusted environment and shared workspace that enables collaboration and cooperation to identify, mitigate, and disrupt cyber crime. Leads received from the NCFTA concerning counterfeit IPR sales and cyber-crimes are vetted through the IPR Center and forwarded to field offices for potential investigation. NCFTA provides inclusive research related to counterfeit

goods, ranging from items entering the Department of Defense supply chain to pharmaceuticals, automotive parts, cosmetics, apparel, electronics, technology products and tobacco. So far this fiscal year, the NCFTA has contributed to more than 30 cases opened by the IPR Center that have led to seven arrests, 25 indictments, 13 convictions and more than \$4 million in counterfeit seizures. You can learn more about the NCFTA by visiting www.ncfta.net/

IPR Center partners with VA to fight counterfeits

IPR Center Director Steve Francis and Joseph Oliver of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Office of Inspector General (OIG) have signed an agreement making the VA the 25th agency to partner with the Center to help protect veterans from counterfeit pharmaceuticals and medical devices or other goods that pose a threat to their safety.

“We are pleased to welcome the Veterans Affairs Office of Inspector General to our growing family of agencies and organizations that have joined us to stand united in the ongoing fight against counterfeit goods and fraud,” Francis said. “We are especially grateful for the opportunity to expand our collaboration with the VA to address the challenges we face to ensure the safety and well-being of our veterans.”



“Partnering with the IPR Center and other federal law enforcement agencies presents an excellent opportunity for our office to meet our commitment to protecting veterans from counterfeit pharmaceuticals and medical devices or other goods that pose a threat to their safety,” said Oliver.

The IPR Center counts the Mexican Revenue Service, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, INTERPOL, Europol and the United Kingdom as international members. In addition to the five international organizations, there are 20 other partnerships aligned with the IPR Center including CBP and the FBI.

IPR Center hosts meeting with international delegation in Brazil



The IPR Center provided intellectual property (IP) enforcement training to customs officials, police investigators, and prosecutors from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay. The training, combined into a regional forum for all countries in Sao Paulo and Santos, Brazil, provided nearly 60 participants with a training workshop featuring an online investigations presentation by an HSI cyber crimes center special agent, as well as a pharmaceutical and tobacco case study from HSI-San Juan and HSI-New Orleans. The training focused on interdictions, investigations and enforcement operations and emphasized the health and safety issues related to IP crime and its connection to transnational criminal organizations.

DHS/ICE Attaché Robert Fuentes delivered opening remarks along with the director general of the Brazilian Federal Highway Police and the undersecretary for the Brazilian Revenue and Customs Service. Additionally, industry representatives from British American Tobacco, the Software Alliance, Nike, Pfizer, Syngenta and the Fórum Nacional Contra a Pirataria (Brazil’s national forum against piracy and illegality) provided presentations outlining their enforcement efforts and collaboration with law enforcement to combat counterfeiting and illicit trade.

Counterfeit Juul products labeled as ‘plastic pipe sample’

Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers in Philadelphia seized an international parcel that contained more than 1,152 counterfeit Juul pods, three chargers and a Juul device. The officers seized the counterfeit items that arrived from China, manifested as “plastic pipe sample.” The parcel instead contained 36 cartons of Juul pods that were headed for an address in Newark, Delaware. Here’s more [Counterfeit Juul products](#)

More than \$11 million in sports rings seized

CBP officers inspecting a shipment from China seized 177 counterfeit professional and collegiate sports rings infringing on the Major League Baseball, National Football League, National Hockey League, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association trademarks. Industry experts say the rings would be worth an estimated \$11.7 million, had they been genuine. Here’s more: [Fake Rings](#)

Did you know...

You can follow the IPR Center and the work of its 25 domestic and international partners on Twitter: [@IPRCenter](#)



The IPR Center encourages companies and private industry organizations to help fight (IP) theft and trade law violations by displaying the “Report IP Theft” button on websites that will link users with a form to detail their allegations. For more information on how to obtain this tool, please visit our website: <https://www.iprcenter.gov>

For more information on these stories, or to submit information for stories in future editions of IPRC Connections, please contact Chuck Jackson, charles.e.jackson@ice.dhs.gov, or (703) 603-3941. In the meantime, please follow us on Twitter: [@IPRCenter](#).