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Michigan men convicted of Clean Air Act violations pardoned by Trump

By Keith Matheny
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Two northern Michigan men convicted of scheming to disable emissions controls on heavy-duty diesel engines were among 11 people pardoned by President Donald Trump on Friday, July 3 − a move amid the Trump Administration's relaxation of vehicle emissions protections that environmentalists say puts public health at further risk.

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Ryan Lalone, owner of Diesel Freak LLC in Gaylord, and his brother and employee, Wade Lalone, pleaded guilty to conspiracy to violate the Clean Air Act and were sentenced in February 2024 to $7,500 and $5,000 fines, respectively, along with one year of probation. The company was fined $750,000 and placed on probation.

Mark Totten, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Michigan, said in 2024 that Diesel Freak LLC designs and builds electronic monitoring and modification kits that adjust engine power and fuel efficiency through Wi-Fi connections with trucks on the road. According to authorities, the conspiracy period ran from approximately 2015 through November 2018, when Diesel Freak was searched by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Diesel Freak conducted remote reprogramming, or tuning, of on-board diagnostic systems, including deletions of environmental controls, allowing diesel engines for large open-road trucks to work more cheaply, without environmental restrictions, "causing pollution beyond that allowed by law."

Ryan Lalone estimated that 70% of Diesel Freak's business was full emissions control deletions, Totten's office stated.

Trump, in a post to his Truth Social network on Friday, alluded to the Lalone and other pardons. "It is my Great Honor to have just signed Pardons for six people who were persecuted by the Biden Administration and were in, or being sent to, prison for 'fixing their car.' While I know this sounds ridiculous, it is nevertheless a fact, and part of the Weaponization and Stupidity that our Country had to endure during four long years of Sleepy Joe Biden. I AM SETTING THEM ALL FREE, RIGHT NOW! President DONALD J. TRUMP"

Messages left with Diesel Freak on Monday, July 6, were not returned.

Those who received clemency were charged after circumventing emissions control regulations that are no longer in effect, a White House official told Fox News Digital. Trump EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin announced earlier this year that diesel exhaust fluid sensors are no longer required, and NOx sensors can be used instead to meet regulatory requirements, "to address nationwide concerns from farmers, truckers, motor coach operators, and other diesel equipment operators regarding DEF system failures and save Americans billions of dollars annually."

On June 29, Trump signed a "Freedom to Fix" presidential memorandum intended to ease restrictions on individuals and independent shops repairing their own cars. The order refers to emissions control technology on vehicles as "the previous

administration('s) crushing environmental regulatory burdens (that) caused the average cost of vehicles to soar."

Some 75 public health, environmental and consumer groups, with local governments representing tens of millions of Americans, sent a letter to Zeldin in January expressing opposition to weakening or delaying protections against dangerous air pollution from vehicles.

https://eu.freep.com/story/news/environment/2026/07/07/trump-pardons-lalone-diesel-freak-clean-air-act-emissions/90823061007/