**Report by MICHAEL HARRIS, President of MACPartners**

**COUNTERFEITING IS NO JOKE!!!**

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Laying on a warm beach hearing the sound of the “lookey-lookey” man offering Gucci handbags, RAY Ban sunglasses and designer label polo shirts – all for €5 or maximum €10 euro each. We may buy them knowing they are fake, but it’s just a bit of holiday fun! Ok, it can be damaging to the product reputation of the high class designer brand, but in general there is little harm done – it is not dangerous to anyone’s health or property – or is it!

So, what about counterfeit or contaminated refrigerant , would you buy a cheap container of refrigerant , knowing that it is not genuine? Would you know the dangers that it can present?

We are no longer in the utopia days of only having one or two specialist chemical refrigerants from one source to work with. We are now dealing with chemical, natural and hydrocarbon refrigerants and many differing blends are being tried and introduced – who knows what we are recovering and charging into the vehicles we service.

We have to consider toxicity and flammability, as well as thermal dynamics of the refrigerants with which we work. Care and due diligence is becoming more important to all of us. Using contaminated or counterfeit (unknown blend) refrigerant will not only affect the thermal performance of the vehicle, but increased wear and tear of components can also result, with known or even unknown consequences!

As a result of the recent widely publicised deaths, which were a direct result of counterfeit refrigerant being used and causing fires and explosions, it is now becoming a serious concern for our industry. Legislation is imposing reduced quotas of refrigerant over the coming years under the phase down program, resulting in escalating cost and availability of legitimate products.

The trade in counterfeit refrigerant is becoming a major crime, even linked in potential size to that of the illegal drugs trade!

One typical known example is the increased mix of R40 (Methyl Chloride) into R134a – this chemical reacts with aluminium components in the presence of air and can become both toxic and corrosive.

The awareness at all levels of the need of good cleanliness, traceability of compliance and purity, the use of approved standard equipment and technician competency, has never been more important than it is today. Could contamination or counterfeit awareness be included into refrigerant safe handling courses?

MACPartners, together with our affiliate associations (MACS and VASA) are committed to working together, with refrigerant manufacturers, standards organisations such as SAE, manufacturers of identification and recovery/charging equipment etc; as well as working together with training organisations, regarding the content and accuracy of the training programme provided. We need to do this to ensure that our workshops and technicians deliver service of the highest technical competence and with their own safety and that of their customers being their highest priority.

Whilst trade associations such as MACPartners, manufacturers and wholesalers continue to increase awareness of this issue, the last line of defence is the user – would you buy a “dodgy” container of cheap refrigerant from an unregistered or qualified seller?

DON’T TAKE THE RISK !

MACPartners is a not for profit trade association defending and supporting the interests of all *sectors of the European vehicle air conditioning sector. Visit our website* [*www.mac-partners.eu*](http://www.mac-partners.eu)

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