

Where are your bearings coming from?

Get the facts about the growing problem of counterfeiting



When you pay for SKF quality, you should get SKF quality.

If you get your SKF bearings or other SKF products through unauthorized distributors, you risk getting far less. Illegal bearing manufacturers deploy devious techniques to fool customers. Some of these include:

- **New unpredictable quality bearings are labeled with false brand markings and put into imitation packaging that appears identical to the real thing.**
- **Bearings are remanufactured, then sold with no indication that they have been remanufactured.**
- **Very old bearings are cleaned, polished and supplied without the buyer being informed of how old they are.**

Thanks to today's sophisticated graphics technologies, unscrupulous manufacturers worldwide are also producing very good copies of SKF product boxes, increasing the odds that their counterfeit bearings will slip into what customers perceive as legitimate industrial distribution channels.

In the past, counterfeit manufacturing was most prevalent in emerging markets. But today, the practice is also occurring in places where such activity was once quite rare. The truth is, counterfeit bearings are appearing virtually everywhere along the global supply chain.

The bearings are not limited by size or type. The general perception is that smaller, easier-to-copy bearings for automotive or consumer product applications dominate. However, large-size bearing counterfeits are increasingly common in the industrial aftermarket, as availability lead times increase when the world economy is strong.

Instead of getting a premium quality product, you may end up purchasing a product with unpredictable quality for a price much higher than it is worth.



Printing plates that are used to customize counterfeit products with different brand names and designations.



False markings are etched on bearings using silk screens such as this.



Counterfeit bearings confiscated during a police raid.

How much trouble can a counterfeit product cause?



Steel mill discovers 1 000 counterfeits

On suspicion that a non-authorized dealer had supplied them with a large quantity of counterfeit SKF bearings, mill management asked SKF to conduct an inspection. The mill reported that, after two to three hours of operation, the replacement bearings were performing so poorly, so the mill's maintenance team was forced to shut down the machinery, dismount the bearings, and remount the older bearings.

After inspecting more than 1 000 suspect bearings, SKF technicians concluded that they were in fact counterfeit, thereby helping the mill keep a costly mistake from becoming even more expensive.



Unplanned shutdown at petrochemical plant

For one unfortunate petrochemical processor, it took an emergency shutdown to reveal that it was being supplied with counterfeit SKF bearings.

Following just two days of operation, one of these bearings failed in a crucial application, forcing the costly, unplanned shutdown. After a complete analysis, SKF confirmed that the bearings were counterfeit. In cooperation with an SKF authorized distributor, the counterfeits were quickly replaced with genuine components.



Marine vessel finds repairs almost worse than problem

After only 14 hours of continuous operation, a generator on-board a marine vessel began experiencing such extreme vibration that it had to be shut down. As the generator had just undergone repairs, the crew was immediately suspicious.

Fearing the worst, the vessel's maintenance team removed the suspect bearing and sent it to SKF for a rigorous bearing failure analysis. SKF confirmed that the bearing was counterfeit, which nearly caused the "repairs" to be worse than the original problem.

What are SKF and other manufacturers doing to combat counterfeiting?

SKF is taking a no-tolerance approach to counterfeiting. We work hard to keep counterfeits away from the market.

- SKF actively assists local law enforcement authorities in taking action against this illegal activity. Successful raids and closed businesses do great harm to the counterfeit trade.
- Efforts are being made to increase awareness about the existence of counterfeits, and how to find sources for genuine products.
- SKF products are equipped with a special anti-counterfeit marking. Trained SKF personnel can recognize if a product is genuine SKF or not.

If you have any questions or concerns about counterfeit SKF products or want to report suspicious actions, please contact SKF. For local area contact details, please refer to www.skf.com. You can also inform SKF headquarters directly by sending an email to genuine@skf.com.

SKF is a member of the World Bearings Association (WBA). The WBA and the member companies have launched a counterfeit awareness campaign to make premium bearing customers aware of the risks and problems with counterfeits at www.stopfakebearings.com.



Police raids take place when enough evidence is collected.

You may not be able to tell which is the real SKF bearing – but your machine will!

Some counterfeit bearings look so much like the real thing that only a trained technician can tell them apart. However, the unpredictable quality of counterfeit bearings – and the risks they pose to equipment – can sometimes be revealed after just a few hours of use.

Counterfeit bearings can degrade and fail quickly, even catastrophically, bringing a plant's production line – and profits – to a halt. The results could include expensive damage to capital equipment, or injury to machine operators and other plant personnel.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

Fig. 1. Fresh out of “production line” the counterfeit bearings looks good on the surface.

Fig. 2 and 3. The photos shows the condition of a counterfeit bearing used for less than 40 hours in a crusher application. A second bearing was just in black pieces.

Fig. 4. The packaging is counterfeited down to the smallest detail.



Fig. 4

All the items shown on this page are counterfeit.

Make sure that you are protected

Given the extremely high “look-alike quality” of today’s counterfeit products, it is very difficult for most people to tell a real SKF product from a fake.

The best way to safeguard authenticity is by sourcing through SKF AUTHORIZED DISTRIBUTORS.

You will find a listing of SKF Authorized Distributors in your country or region on your local SKF website. Or, visit www.skf.com, click on Services, then Distributor Network, to find the closest location to you.



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