

# 'Copycats': a risk for users, and a problem for the industry

Copycat products imitating Kistler's Lineas® Weigh In Motion (WIM) sensors have recently begun to be promoted on international markets. Original Lineas® sensors are field-proven products that have long been established throughout the world. This flyer is intended to help integrators and end users to make informed decisions.

## Lineas® – the original

Kistler is a Swiss-based international group that was founded over 60 years ago and now has approximately 2,000 employees worldwide. The Kistler Group has built up its reputation through consistent innovation in piezoelectric measuring equipment. In the traffic market, Kistler has established its unique Lineas® WIM sensors over the last 25 years with over 70,000 sensor installations in more than 50 countries around the world. This reputation is the result of hard work and continuous investment in product improvements (the Lineas® Type 9195G... is now the fifth generation of the product). The Lineas® sensor family currently includes the Lineas® Type 9195G... for enforcement applications, the Lineas® Compact Type 9196... for statistical applications, and the Lineas® Digital Type 9181... for automatic enforcement applications that require the highest level of accuracy.



Lineas® quartz sensor for Weigh In Motion (WIM) Type 9195G

## Copycat products

"Where there is light, there is also shadow." Copycat companies operate by attempting to profit economically from the reputation of a commercially successful product. To achieve this, the copycat company markets a product that is strikingly similar in appearance to the original product; this confuses the public, who then purchase the 'lookalike' version even though they intended to buy the original product.

## Copycat products are low in price

Copycat companies are not well-established enterprises, nor do they own product brands backed by serious references. Their strategy is to penetrate the market by offering low-priced imitation products. These low prices come with serious risks for the purchaser and, in the long run, they entail higher costs. To offer low prices, copycat companies have to cut their costs at all levels – especially by compromising on the quality of the materials used, by operating the simplest production processes with no provision for traceability, and by limiting their investments in appropriate machinery. Moreover, the copycat company does not invest in the product development required



Certificate of origin for Lineas® sensors: Types 9195..., 9196..., 9181...

to improve and upgrade the product over time. All these factors seriously impact the final quality of the products: both their performance and their longevity are poor, and they pose a risk for the buyer. And as a further drawback, these products are not usually covered by after-sales support.

## Copycat products have weaknesses

In the case of Lineas® WIM sensors, the copycat product looks very similar to the original Kistler product, but delivers significantly lower performance. The product specifications in the data sheets for the copycat product are typically copied from the original product data sheet, and they do not reflect the real performance of the copycat product. Various investigations as well as field experience have shown that copycat products have startling design weaknesses: low linearity of signal response and fast degradation of electric properties lead to poor accuracy, unstable properties, and limited lifetime.

## The impact of Intellectual Property (IP) rights

Copycat companies do not follow a proper innovation and development process – they merely manufacture a 'lookalike' product. When the original product is protected by IP rights such as trademarks and patents, there is a high risk of infringement. The essential function of a trademark is to indicate the origin of a product. An infringement of the trademark-protected sign occurs when an identical or similar sign is used for similar or apparently identical goods and there is a likelihood that the public will be confused. A patent is infringed if a copycat product contains patent-protected technical features.

Kistler vigorously enforces its IP rights whenever its own interests or those of its customers are at stake. IP claims can be enforced through court proceedings that may result in the discontinuation of sales of the copycat product, the destruction of copycat products already sold, or the complete replacement of sold copycat products – outcomes which, in turn, can lead to high costs.

Kistler products are protected by many IP rights including trademarks, patents and designs.

In over 20 countries, Lineas® WIM sensors are protected by registered trademarks and also by numerous registered patents and designs.

### Making the decision

End users and integrators would be well advised to undertake a detailed assessment of their needs in terms of product requirements, product support and application expertise – and to ensure they purchase products that meet their expectations, obtained from the proper sources. In short: 'Make sure you know what you want and what you are getting'.

To be certain that you achieve these goals, and to qualify your supplier correctly, be sure to ask for a certificate of origin for the supplied products, for installation references, and for specific certifications such as the ISO quality certificate, OIML certificate, CE certificate, installation certifications and similar attestations.

Kistler is always glad to assist you with selecting the proper equipment, and we can also offer help with identifying copycats.

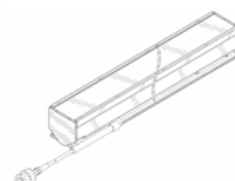
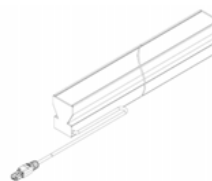
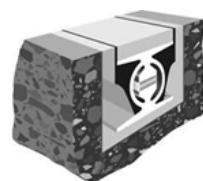
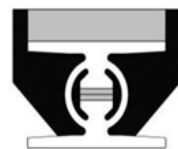
### Examples of Kistler trademarks and design patents:



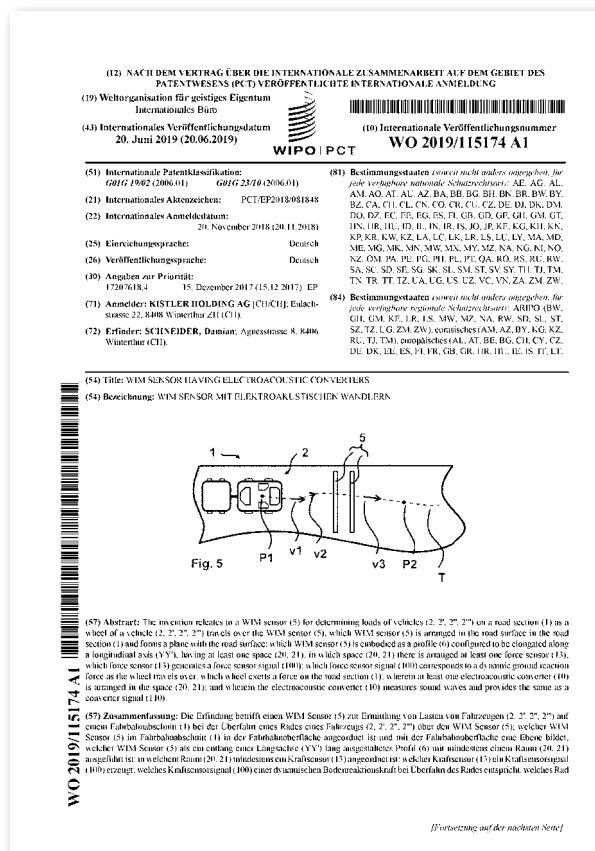
KISTLER

LINEAS

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### Example of Kistler patent application:



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