

Panasonic and lighting supplier, Osram. The company carries out laboratory tests on replica goods using the original manufacturer's product specifications. If the product is proved to be counterfeit, the company then works with the police and customs to seize the merchandise and close down the operations.

"The only way we can shut down a counterfeiter is by getting written authority from the original manufacturer," said Nadia Alkhan Abdul, Bentley's marketing and sales manager.

"Goods are then confiscated. The counterfeiter can end up spending time in prison and is forced to pay compensation."

Al Rahma called on the Dubai Government to form a support association and tighten its import regulations to help combat the problem.

"It is a very serious issue. Dubai is a developed country and is striving to be a major player on the world map; more should be done to protect the end-user.

"The government needs to put an association in place to support the people and companies that suffer from this. We track down fraudsters because we know from experience what to look for. But at other times, we are helpless to do anything about it."

Other manufacturers at this week's Big 5 show have supported the counterfeit claims. Helmut Begasse, export manager at KFV said: "Counterfeiting is a growing problem for us — we're not only seeing cheap imitations on the market, but also good quality copies from China. They can offer products for a tenth of the price that we can, and there's no way of stopping that."

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