

# NEWS FROM SCDC

## South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs



Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston, Administrator

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### OVER 1300 CONSUMERS TO RECEIVE \$1.3M IN REFUNDS FROM ROCK HILL DEALERSHIP

The Department of Consumer Affairs is requiring Rock Hill automobile dealership Harrelson Toyota to refund over \$1.3 million dollars to approximately 1,300 consumers. The refunds are granted for excessive interest charged on vehicle sales from January 31, 2000 through September 24, 2001. Consumers should also receive payment adjustments for the remainder of their contracts reflecting interest rates no higher than the 18% Annual Percentage Rate (APR) allowed by law during that time period.

“So far, Harrelson Toyota has been cooperative in making adjustments and refunds to affected consumers,” said SCDCA Administrator Brandolyn Thomas Pinkston.

According to the South Carolina Consumer Protection Code, all businesses (including automobile dealers) desiring to charge more than 18% APR must file a Maximum Rate Schedule (MRS) with the Department and conspicuously post the rate schedule at their place of business. Harrelson Toyota failed to file a MRS with the Department of Consumer Affairs for the period of January 31, 2000 through September 24, 2001. The dealership was also fined in 2004 for failing to file a MRS (creditors are only allowed to pay fines or penalties once in a four-year period).

“This matter came to the Department’s attention through a complaint filed with the Consumer Services Division,” said Donna DeMichael, Consumer Services Director. “Harrelson has already provided a refund for excess finance charges in the amount of \$1,687.50 to the consumer that filed the complaint.”

Harrelson Toyota is notifying consumers who purchased vehicles during this period; in cases where consumers are unable to be contacted, the excess charges should be applied to consumers’ existing accounts. Consumers that purchased a vehicle from Harrelson Toyota between January 31, 2000 and September 24, 2001 and have financing contracts that exceed 18% may contact the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs at (803) 734.4200 or 1.800.922.1594 (toll free in South Carolina).

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#### About the South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs:

Established by the Consumer Protection code in 1974, The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs represents the interests of South Carolina Consumers.

Our mission is to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, mediation, enforcement and education.

For more information, visit [www.sccconsumer.gov](http://www.sccconsumer.gov).

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