

DON'T GET SOAKED BUYING A FLOOD-DAMAGED VEHICLE



In the wake of last year's floods, consumers shopping for a new or used vehicle are urged to be cautious of dishonest businesses and individuals who may try to sell flood-damaged vehicles without revealing the vehicle's history.

Potential scammers are refurbishing these flood-damaged vehicles and selling them to consumers without the consumers knowing the full damage of the vehicles. Because of the floods in the Northeast and those resulting from Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita, vehicles that have been under water for weeks, even months are now on the market. Vehicles that have been under water can have serious mechanical or electrical problems that would not be visible at the time of purchase. Bacteria and mold may also cause health problems for the buyer.

TIPS FOR THE CONSUMER **HOW NOT TO GET SOAKED WHEN** **SHOPPING FOR A VEHICLE**

- **Take a test drive.**
- **Inspect the vehicle inside and out.**
- **Ask questions to learn as much as you can about the vehicle. (Include question(s) about flood-damage). The consumer should have the seller sign a written statement containing the information.**
- **Check out the seller:**
 - For *dealers*, contact the SCDCA, and**
 - For *individuals*, check the title to make sure you are dealing with the actual vehicle's owner.**
- **Read and understand every document you are asked to sign.**



Here is a list of things consumers can do that will help avoid buying a flood-damaged vehicle unknowingly:

 **Inspect:** Check the trunk, glove compartment, the dashboard, and below the seats for water damage such as silt, mud, or rust.

 **Examine:** Examine the interior closely, make sure that the upholstery and carpeting matches and fits tight, if it doesn't this could be a sign that it has been replaced. Also check for discoloring, faded or stained material, which also could be a sign of serious water damage.

 **Turn-on:** Turn the ignition key and make sure that the warning, accessory lights, and gauges come on and are working properly.

 **Test:** Test all the interior and exterior lights, windshield wipers, turn signals, stereo, windows, mirrors, and seats. Also check to see if both the heater and air conditioner works. It might be wise to check for musty odors while the air conditioner is on.

 **Visit:** Have the vehicle inspected by a trusted mechanic. Always get the vehicle inspected BEFORE handling any money. Most reputable dealers will let consumers have an independent mechanic inspect the vehicle BEFORE purchase.

Ask: Ask to see a detailed vehicle history report. The report can reveal hidden problems from a vehicle's past. If the seller does not offer a report, use the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) to check the vehicle's history at



www.carfax.com. **Note:** CarFax.com www.CarFax.com/flood and the National Insurance Crime Bureau www.nicb.org are offering FREE VIN reports, limited to information on flood damage.

Important Flood-Damaged Vehicle Information brought to you by:

South Carolina Automobile Dealers Association
Carolinas Independent Automobile Dealers Association
Automotive Services Association
South Carolina Tire Dealers and Retreaders Association, Inc.
Keystone Automotive Industries, Inc.
Automotive Aftermarket Association of the
Carolinas & Tennessee, Inc.
South Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles
South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs

**For more information contact:
South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs**



3600 Forest Drive, Suite 300, Columbia, South Carolina 29250
Telephone: 803.734.4200 or 1.800.522.1594
Fax: 803.734.4299 Website: www.sccconsumer.gov