



NEWS FROM SCDCA

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS

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Looking for a Car? Don't Get Tricked into Buying a Flood-Damaged Vehicle

COLUMBIA, S.C. – The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs (SCDCA) is urging consumers to be cautious when shopping for a new or used vehicle. 2018 brought hurricanes and flooding to the Southeast yet again and dishonest businesses and individuals may attempt to sell storm-damaged vehicles. The following tips can help you avoid being tricked by a dishonest seller:

- **Know your seller.** Stick with reputable, well-known sellers. Get references from family and friends.
- **Inspect and examine.** Thoroughly check the vehicle for silt, mud and rust. Consumers may even need to check the trunk, glove compartment and under the seats, noting whether upholstery and carpeting is faded, ill-fitting or discolored.
- **Test, test, test.** Test all interior and exterior lights, windshield wipers, turn signals, stereo, mirrors and seats. Test the air conditioning and heater, smelling for musty odors. The heavy smell of disinfectants or cleaners may be a sign the seller is trying to mask a mold or odor problem.
- **Get a mechanic's opinion.** Have a trusted mechanic thoroughly check the car for signs of damage, including mechanical and electrical. Paying for this service up front may save a consumer in the long run.
- **Check the car's history.** Ask to see a detailed vehicle history report. Consumers can also go to www.vehiclehistory.gov to pull a report themselves. Use the VIN to get a free report on the vehicle's flood history at www.nicb.org. (This site is run by the National Insurance Crime Bureau, so if the car did not have insurance, it will not be in the database.)
- **Trust your gut.** If a deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. If anything seems suspicious, walk away.

Consumers who believe they have purchased a flood-damaged vehicle are encouraged to file a complaint. SCDCA processes and mediates consumer complaints against regulated businesses, refers complaints that fall within another agency's jurisdiction and mediates those complaints against businesses that are unregulated. To file a complaint, visit www.consumer.sc.gov and click FILE A COMPLAINT.

About SCDCA

The South Carolina Department of Consumer Affairs aims to protect consumers from inequities in the marketplace through advocacy, complaint mediation, enforcement and education. To file a complaint or get information on consumer issues, visit www.consumer.sc.gov or call toll-free, 1-800-922-1594.

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