

Consumer Corner

Avoiding Flood-Damaged Used Cars

(NAPSA)—It's important to steer clear of used cars that were waterlogged in floods, hurricanes and other storms. Experts say over 75 percent of declared federal disasters are related to floods. The vehicles can turn up in areas thousands of miles from where the damage occurred, and unknowing consumers who purchase a water-damaged auto from a dishonest seller may have little recourse.

A Growing Concern

It's estimated that the number of waterlogged wrecks on the market has doubled in recent years, despite the fact that most flood-damaged vehicles are written off by insurance companies. Indeed, many of the cars make their way back to the used-car market, rebuilt and disguised as ordinary used cars with clean titles. Fortunately, there are ways to spot the telltale signs of a flood-damaged car. Carfax offers these tips:

Look Around

Check the trunk, dashboard and glove compartment for silt, mud, rust and other signs of water damage. You should also examine upholstery and carpeting closely. If it doesn't match the interior or fits loosely, it may have been replaced. Discolored, faded or stained materials might indicate water damage.

Run A Test

Test the interior and exterior lights, as well as the windshield wipers, turn signals, DC power outlet, radio, heater and air conditioner several times to be certain they work. Also, turn the ignition



A vehicle history report can help used-car buyers avoid flood-damaged vehicles.

key and make sure the accessory and warning lights and gauges work properly. Be certain the ABS and air bag lights come on, too.

The Nose Knows

Smell the interior of the car to check for musty odors. It's also smart to flex some of the wires beneath the dashboard. Wet wires become brittle upon drying and may crack.

Get A Second Opinion

Bring the car to a trusted mechanic for a prepurchase inspection. Always get a vehicle checked before handing money over.

Know Your History

Ask to see a detailed vehicle history report. Thousands of dealers provide them free—just say, “Show Me the Carfax.” A Carfax Vehicle History Report can reveal any number of hidden problems from a vehicle's past, including flood titles. Used-car shoppers worried about flood damage can also check for free at flood.carfax.com.