

Ask Auto Andy

Submerged To Re-Emerged

(NAPSA)—Dear Andy:

Watching coverage of torrential rains and the resulting floods in the news lately, I started to wonder what happens to those cars that are submerged in water. Are they safe to drive once they get dried out?

—K.B., “Waterlogged”
in Maryland

Dear K.B.:

Many of the cars you see—especially the ones that make it onto the evening news—should go to a watery grave. Because of potential damage to the body, electrical systems and internal computers, many will likely be totaled out by their insurers for flood or water damage. However, even when they are junked and branded as flood cars, they can still find their way onto America’s highways and byways.

States where flooding occurs make efforts to track vehicles totaled due to flood damage and warn their citizens about these waterlogged wrecks. But they are still sometimes dried out, cleaned up and foisted onto unsuspecting buyers. That’s why it is important for any used car shopper to be his/her own private detective.

Carfax.com, which reports flood and water damage titles in their vehicle history reports, offers these additional tips for uncovering a vehicle’s watery past:

- **Check**—Check the trunk, glove box, the dashboard and below the seat for signs of water damage, including sand, mud or rust.

- **Examine**—Examine the upholstery and carpeting. If it doesn’t match the interior or doesn’t fit



Cars that have been damaged in floods can still be cleaned up, dried out and sold.

properly, it may have been replaced. Discolored, faded or stained material may indicate water damage.

- **Turn On**—Turn on the vehicle and make sure that the warning lights and gauges work properly.

- **Bend**—Bend or flex wires located beneath the dashboard. If a vehicle has been submerged, wires may be brittle and crack once dried out.

- **Inhale**—Take a deep breath, smelling for musty odors from mildew. Do this with the defroster and air conditioner on.

- **Ask**—Ask for the detailed vehicle history report, or get a copy for yourself. Carfax reports show flood or water damage titles and can reveal if a vehicle has been titled/registered in “at risk” areas where flooding has occurred. The company even offers a free Flood Check to help uncover those title issues at www.carfax.com/flood.

Finding out about possible flood damage before buying a used car can help keep you from getting soaked by an unscrupulous seller.

Safe driving,
Andy