

## State warns buyers to beware of flood-damaged vehicles

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**Glen Burnie, MD** – Following recent hurricanes that devastated portions of the south, the Maryland Department of Transportation Motor Vehicle Administration (MDOT MVA) is cautioning customers to beware of flood-damaged vehicles for sale. Automotive experts and consumer advocates estimate that hurricanes Harvey and Irma—which primarily impacted Texas, Louisiana, and Florida in the United States—left as many as one million vehicles with flood damage.

“Customers shopping for a vehicle should conduct thorough research on the vehicle’s history to determine if it experienced flood-related damage,” said MDOT MVA Administrator Christine Nizer. “State motor vehicle agencies are required to label vehicles that have experienced flood damage as salvage, and the vehicle’s title should reflect that condition.”

Customers should check the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) history to determine if the vehicle was registered in one of the flood-ravaged areas during the hurricanes. Additionally, used-vehicle buyers should have a knowledgeable mechanic perform a thorough pre-purchase inspection to identify any potential signs of flood or other damage.

“Purchasing a vehicle is a major financial decision for the average person, and what consumers don’t know can hurt them,” said Marceline White, Executive Director of the Maryland Consumer Rights Coalition. “It’s important that consumers seek out knowledge and resources beforehand so that they don’t get conned out of their hard-earned money.”

Buyers need to be educated when they consider purchasing a used vehicle. The most obvious signs that a vehicle may have experienced flood damage include:

- Condensation in the headlights and/or taillights;
- A musty/mildew odor throughout the car;
- Damp and/or mildew presence under the seats or carpeting; and
- Vehicle rust spots due to water damage.

Damage to various electrical and mechanical components from water penetration also may not be easily detected.

“Whenever a natural disaster occurs, inevitably there are scammers who try to take advantage of consumers,” said Al Redmer Jr., Commissioner of the Maryland Insurance Administration. “However, there are numerous resources and organizations consumers can seek out to protect them from becoming a victim.”

For more information about purchasing a vehicle in Maryland, visit [their web site](#). You also may contact the Maryland Insurance Administration at 410-468-2000 or 800-492-6116, or visit [www.insurance.maryland.gov](http://www.insurance.maryland.gov).

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