



Attorney General Bill Schuette Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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After Historic Floods, Schuette Warns Michigan Residents to be on the Lookout for Flood-Damaged Vehicles When Purchasing a Car

LANSING – Michigan Attorney General Bill Schuette today cautioned Michigan drivers searching for a new vehicle to be on the lookout for flood damaged cars, trucks and SUVs. Flooding in many parts of the state over the last week has likely damaged vehicles, and many will end up on the used car market. Vehicles with flood damage can appear for sale on the internet or at car lots far away from the storm area, without any mention flood damage or obvious signs of damage.

“It is important to do your research before making a car purchase, and I urge anyone looking into purchasing a used vehicle to take extra time in examining their potential new car,” said Schuette. “While most auto retailers would never sell a damaged vehicle, unfortunately there are still unscrupulous vendors who take advantage of hard-working individuals to make a buck.”

Water can damage vital parts of a car including airbag sensors, brakes, and electrical systems —and the damage may not show up right away. Weeks or months could pass before evidence of damage is known, putting the purchase past warranty and leaving the driver without a working car.

PROTECT YOURSELF BEFORE PURCHASING

Have the vehicle inspected by an independent, competent automotive technician who has no relation to the seller. Since water damage can be hard to spot, paying an expert mechanic for an inspection is a good idea.

Check the vehicle history. Get the VIN (vehicle identification number) and trace its history through the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System database for a small fee. The National Motor Vehicle Information System is administered by the U.S. Department of Justice. Some consumers also choose to trace vehicle history using commercially available reports such as **Experian's Auto Check** or **CarFax**. A vehicle history should tell you if the car has been in a flood region or issued a flood or salvage title. Remember though, these databases do not always have up-to-date or complete information about a vehicle (which is why the independent inspection is critical).

Be on the lookout for vehicles with tell-tale signs of being submerged in water. For example:

- Musty or "over-perfumed" smell or signs of mold or mildew;
- Water stains, mud or residue in the trunk, under the carpet, floor mats, gas and brake pedals, and in hard-to-reach places difficult to clean;
- Title or registration histories indicating the car was in a flood area;
- Car hesitates, runs rough, or shows signs of premature rust or corrosion in places where you wouldn't expect to see rust, such as the upper door hinges, trunk latches, and screws on the console.
- Always physically inspect the vehicle's paper title before you buy. Check to see if it has been branded as "flood," "junk," "salvage," "rebuilt" or another brand indicating the vehicle was severely damaged. But beware; a clean title does not prove the car is undamaged. The title may have been 'laundered' across state lines or altered to conceal the brand.

FILE A COMPLAINT

Consumers should file complaints against a used motor vehicle dealer with the **Secretary of State, Bureau of Information Security, Regulatory Monitoring Division online** or by contacting the Bureau of Information Security, Regulatory Monitoring Division at 888-SOS-MICH (888-767-6424).

Consumers may contact the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division at:

CONSUMER PROTECTION DIVISION

P.O. Box 30213 Lansing, MI 48909 517-373-1140 Fax: 517-241-3771 Toll free: 877-765-8388 **Online complaint form**

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