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May 22, 2018

TxDMV Warns Buyers to Beware of Flood-Damaged Vehicles

AUSTIN – Giving someone a new or used car as a graduation gift may earn you an “A” for effort, but failing to do your homework before buying could be a dangerous and costly mistake. More than eight months after Hurricane Harvey damaged an estimated 500,000 cars and trucks, Texans are still at risk of unknowingly purchasing flood-damaged vehicles.

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) is urging Texans to do their research before buying a new or used car.

“Too many Texans already get taken advantage of by people selling flooded, salvaged, and rebuilt vehicles as though they are in perfect condition,” said TxDMV Executive Director Whitney Brewster.

TxDMV uses a national title database under the United States Department of Justice to help stop title fraud and urges consumers to learn how to protect themselves when buying a vehicle. Brewster cautioned, “Don’t find a problem after you bought the vehicle. Protect yourself *before* you buy.”

TxDMV offers these tips to help detect water damage on a vehicle:

- Get the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) off the vehicle you want to buy.
- Do a Title Check and obtain a Vehicle History Report at www.TxDMV.gov/title-check.
- Have an independent mechanic examine the vehicle.
- Examine the interior and engine compartment for evidence of water and grime. An extremely clean vehicle might also be a red flag to investigate further.
- Check for rust on areas of the vehicle that normally do not come in contact with water.
- Check for issues with electrical components such as door locks, windows, or motorized seats.

While these inspection suggestions will not detect water damage in every case, they do provide some information to protect consumers from purchasing a vehicle damaged by water, such as a flood. If you are considering purchasing a used vehicle, consider having it inspected by a licensed mechanic.

Go to TxDMV’s [Title Check](#) page. It provides information on obtaining a Vehicle History Report from the only vehicle title database in the nation where all states, insurance carriers, and junk and salvage yards are required by federal law to report. It contains title information on cars, trucks, motorcycles, motorhomes, buses, and big rigs - virtually every titled motor vehicle in the country.

“When title fraud happens, innocent people are hurt,” Brewster said. “We need everyone to urge their family members, neighbors, friends, and coworkers to do their research and spend a few extra dollars before they buy any vehicle.”

“Remember,” she added. “Don’t Buy a *Wreck*. Do a Title Check.”

For more information:

- Title Check, www.TxDMV.gov/title-check
- National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, www.vehiclehistory.gov





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The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles serves, protects and advances the citizens and industries in the state with quality motor vehicle related services. For every \$1 it spends, the TxDMV returns \$11 to the state. Each year the agency registers more than 24 million vehicles; issues more than 8 million vehicle titles; licenses approximately 34,000 motor vehicle dealers and distributors; credentials more than 60,000 motor carriers; issues more than 650,000 oversize/overweight permits; investigates approximately 13,000 complaints against dealers and motor carriers; and awards grants to law enforcement agencies to reduce vehicle burglaries and thefts. Learn more at www.TxDMV.gov.