

[Washington AG: Flood Damaged Cars Washing up in Washington](#)

Local News

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SEATTLE, WA—The Attorney General's Office and the Better Business Bureau today issued a warning that flood damaged cars from Hurricane Sandy are showing up for sale in Washington state. The AGO and BBB caution consumers to make sure the vehicle you buy does not have flood damage. "Once the waters recede, scam artists often descend into a flood area," said Washington State Attorney General Bob Ferguson. "Buyer beware, protect yourself from buying a rebuilt, water-logged wreck. Make sure you check the history of the vehicle and take a close look at the physical condition." "Don't be fooled by shiny paint and a 'new car' smell," says Robert W.G. Andrew, CEO of BBB serving Alaska, Oregon and Western Washington. "Unscrupulous sellers will use every trick in the book to clean up and sell totaled vehicles. If buyers aren't careful, the cars they end up with could be loaded with hidden and serious problems." Flood damaged cars may look normal, but almost always have serious problems including chronic mildew and corroded wires that lead to electrical failure.

Research the title and the vehicle identification number at the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System, www.vehiclehistory.gov and/or CARFAX, www.flood.carfax.com. "Totaled" cars get a new title marked with the word "salvage" or "flood" but sometimes just a coded letter or number. Carefully inspect the vehicle inside and out:

- **Test Drive First** - Before you buy a used vehicle you should thoroughly examine the vehicle and go for a test drive to test the vehicle's mechanical operating condition. This means that you should drive the vehicle as you would under every day driving conditions — freeway, in-city, hills etc.
- **Check the Gauges** - You should check the operation of all electrical and comfort amenities (windows, lights and turn signals, defroster, heater and air conditioner), blow the horn, check the brakes by coming to a controlled emergency stop, and listen to the engine accelerate when entering on to the freeway and on hills.
- **Complete a Visual Inspection** - Do a complete visual inspection of the vehicle; look under the vehicle for any signs of frame damage or collision repairs, any flood damage and any missing, loose or ill-fitting body parts; check the engine compartment and trunk for fresh paint that might reveal prior damage or signs of flood damage.
- **Check it out with Your Mechanic** - If the vehicle passes your test, take it for an inspection by a qualified mechanic of your choosing. The mechanic should check the brakes, electrical system, compression, transmission, and every other system on the vehicle, especially any which caught your attention during the test drive. You should also consider an emissions control system inspection and test. Inspections may cost you some money, but if the mechanic discovers a major defect, you have saved yourself a big problem and a lot of money. When an inspection reveals only minor defects, you can use that information to negotiate either a lower purchase price or get the dealer to agree, in writing, to fix the items before purchase. For more information: <http://www.atg.wa.gov/ConsumerIssues/...autions.aspx#Ubmzfvk-plo> www.carfax.com/car_buying/flood_damage_cars

The Office of the Attorney General is the chief legal office for the state of Washington with attorneys and staff in 27 divisions across the state providing legal services to roughly 200 state agencies, boards and commissions. Attorney General Bob Ferguson is working hard to protect consumers and seniors against fraud, keep our communities

safe, protect our environment and stand up for our veterans.