



Buyer Beware

Used Cars - The Danger of Flood Damage



The Bad News

Many unsuspecting consumers will fall victim to the thousands of flood damaged vehicles sold by scam artists across the nation.

Water damaged vehicles can be one of the most costly types of damage. The long-term effects of corroded electronic parts and wiring is devastating and dangerous. These electrical systems are almost always impossible to repair and can short vital components, such as brakes and air bags.

The Good News

You can save yourself thousands of dollars and detect water damage yourself by following these guidelines:

- Obtain a history report on the vehicle. With that report in hand, you may find out such things as whether the car was in a flood or sustained major damage in an accident. Beware, this will not safeguard you 100%. There are many loopholes in the system that a fraudulent seller can use to hide the vehicle's history
- Unless cleaned properly, flood damage will leave grass and debris around the radiator, underneath and around the frame and on front and rear suspension components, be sure to inspect these areas
- Look for waterlines which may be visible in the engine compartment, rear firewall areas, and even inside door pockets of the door panels and interior trim areas
- A mildew smell is a very good indication that the carpeting and padding underneath the carpet was wet
- Inspect connectors and wiring for signs of corrosion
- Check for rusted bolts on metal components, particularly underneath where water has been standing
- Inspect for windows fogging up on the inside after the vehicle has sat overnight, this is an indication that there may be water underneath the carpet and or carpet padding
- Inspect trunk for waterlines, corroded connectors and wiring, and rust
- **Your best line of defense is to have a trained certified mechanic inspect the vehicle before you purchase it. The small amount you spend for an inspection could save you thousands of dollars down the road.**

Sources: Washington Post online, 09/22/05 www.carjunky.com Buying Tips - "Used Car Buyers Beware", 09/12/05

Helping People Live Safer, More Secure Lives

