

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

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AG STRANGE WARNS CONSUMERS ABOUT FLOODED VEHICLES

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange warns Alabamians who are in the market for a used automobile to be wary of possible flooded vehicles that may come into the area as a result of the catastrophic flooding in Louisiana. Vehicles may have a nice polished look but still could suffer dramatic damage from having been submerged in floodwaters.

Under Alabama law, a car that has ever been totaled due to water damage will always be labeled on its title as a flood vehicle. Alabama law requires that anyone who sells, donates or exchanges a car that is a flood vehicle, must disclose this beforehand in writing to the recipient. Furthermore, it is a violation of Alabama’s Deceptive Trade Practices Act to fail to disclose that a car has a flood title.

“I urge consumers in Alabama to take care in buying a used vehicle to ensure that it has not suffered flood damage,” said Attorney General Strange. “If they do discover or suspect that someone is trying to fraudulently pass off a flood damaged car without the required disclosure, they should notify my office, the Alabama Department of Revenue and the National Insurance Crime Bureau.”

Attorney General Strange suggested that consumers protect themselves by following these tips offered by the Federal Trade Commission:

- **Look for** water stains, mildew, sand or silt under the carpet, floor mats, and dashboard, and in the wheel well where the spare is stored. Look for fogging inside the headlights and taillights.
- **Do a smell test.** A heavy aroma of cleaners and disinfectants is a sign that someone's trying to mask a mold or odor problem.
- **Get a vehicle history report.** Check a trusted database service. There are reliable services that charge a small fee. The National Insurance Crime Bureau’s (NICB) free database includes flood damage and other information.
- **Understand the difference between a “salvage title” and a “flood title.”** A “salvage title” means the car was declared a total loss by an insurance company because of a serious accident or some other problems which may or may not include flood damage. A “flood title” is issued for a motor vehicle for which an insurance company has paid a total loss in Alabama due, in part, to being damaged by water. In other states, a flood title indicates the car has damage from water which may have been deep enough to fill the engine compartment. The title status is part of a vehicle history report.
- **Have your mechanic inspect the car’s** mechanical and electrical components, and systems that contain fluids, for water contamination.

Consumers may report suspected fraud to the Attorney General’s Consumer Interest Division by calling toll free to 1-800-392-5658 or through the Attorney General’s website at www.ago.alabama.gov. Reports may also be made to the Alabama Department of Revenue at 334-242-9000 or titles@revenue.alabama.gov or to the National Insurance Crime Bureau at 1-800-TEL-NICB (835-6422).

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