



Department of Justice



Office of Justice Programs

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPT. 14, 2017
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OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS
CONTACT: JOAN LARocca
202-307-0703

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE OFFERS RESOURCE ON DAMAGED VEHICLES

Provides Consumers with Vehicle History Information

WASHINGTON – The Office of Justice Programs’ (OJP) Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) recommended today that in light of the anticipated high volume of flood-damaged automobiles in the aftermath of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, consumers educate themselves about a vehicle’s history before making any purchase decisions. Overseen by BJA, the National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS) is designed to prevent concealment of flood damage and other vehicle histories.

After past hurricane events, authorities reported truckloads of flooded vehicles being taken out of the impact zone where they were dried out, cleaned and readied for sale to unsuspecting consumers in states that do not brand flood vehicles. It is currently estimated that due to Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma, as many as 1 million flood-damaged automobiles could potentially be passed on to unsuspecting buyers in the coming weeks and months.

The floods caused by or associated with these hurricanes have resulted in severe water damage to thousands of vehicles that can make electrical systems and airbag sensors prone to failure. Prior to purchasing a vehicle, NMVTIS allows consumers to find information on the vehicle's title, most recent odometer reading and brand history. A “brand” is a descriptive label that states assign to a vehicle to identify the vehicle's current or prior condition, such as “junk,” “salvage” or “flood” designation. By capturing into one system specific information from multiple entities such as state motor vehicle departments, insurance carriers, salvage auto auctions, automobile recyclers, and junk and salvage yards, NMVTIS offers states and consumers protection from title fraud and potentially unsafe vehicles.

“BJA remains committed to ensuring the consumer protection benefits provided by NMVTIS,” said Acting BJA Director Tracey Trautman. “We encourage prospective purchasers to consider obtaining a NMVTIS vehicle history report and have the vehicle checked by a trusted mechanic as part of making an informed used car-buying decision.” The list of approved NMVTIS vehicle history report providers can be found on the official NMVTIS website at: https://www.vehiclehistory.gov/nmvtis_vehiclehistory.html

The Office of Justice Programs, headed by Acting Assistant Attorney General Alan R. Hanson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice and assist victims. OJP has six bureaus and offices: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering and Tracking. More information about OJP and its components can be found at: www.ojp.gov.

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