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NEWS RELEASE

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Utah car buyers warned to be aware of purchasing flood-damaged vehicles

Although news of Texas and Florida hurricanes may be filed in memories of 2017 disasters, Utah residents are being warned to be careful when purchasing used vehicles.

Utah's Motor Vehicle Enforcement Division strongly encourages residents to arm themselves with information before purchasing a used vehicle.

"Our MVED police officers have prevented over 70 people in recent months from unknowingly purchasing a flood-damaged vehicle," said MVED spokesperson Charlie Roberts. They include motorcycles, cars, trucks, and off-road vehicles.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that 2017 storms damaged nearly one million company vehicles.

"Many of those flooded vehicles find their way to Utah," Roberts said.

In addition to purchasing a vehicle that may have electrical and other unseen damages, it creates a serious problem when the owner attempts to re-sell the vehicle and it has a flood-damaged title.

Unfortunately, many scammers are looking to profit off the post-hurricane flood market, Roberts said.

If a vehicle is declared "totaled," it will receive a new "salvage" or "flood" title.

However, the vehicle can then be sold at a salvage auction and eventually purchased by unsuspecting buyer.

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Flooded vehicles – November 20, 2017

Buyers should be aware of flood-damaged vehicles with clean or “lost” titles.

“Utah is a ‘buyer-beware’ state, so it is important for potential owners to be on the lookout for flood-damaged vehicles when shopping.

There are several things buyers can do to determine if a vehicle has been damaged.

For example, if a car smells musty, there is a high likelihood it has been exposed to water. Often the seller may try to mask the smell of mildew with strong smells of deodorizer or air fresheners.

Mud, dirt, or waterlines inside the vehicles are possible signs of flood damage. Buyers are encouraged to check for hidden dirt spots such as the trunk, glove box, and under the dashboard.

Wise buyers will also check under the vehicle to see if there is an unusual amount of rust or corrosion for the vehicle’s age.

MVED officials also encourage buyers to run a Carfax or other independent vehicle history report.

These reports list repair history, number of past owners, accidents reported, and other information garnered from data records of police, insurance companies and departments of motor vehicles.

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