

## **Buyer Beware: Safety Hazards of Flood-Damaged Vehicles**

Millions of people in the United States have suffered property damage and loss, widespread power outages, and major flooding as a result of Hurricane Harvey and Hurricane Irma. As recovery and restoration efforts begin it is important for consumers to be aware of the safety impact of flooding on vehicles. Severe water damage can make vehicles' electrical systems, including their airbag sensors, prone to failure. When a car's electrical systems have been compromised, it may no longer be safe or roadworthy. After past hurricane events, truckloads of flooded vehicles were reportedly taken out of the affected areas to states far away where they were dried out, cleaned, and sold. Purchasers of those vehicles may not have known that the vehicles had endured a saltwater flood that damaged their electrical systems.

**The National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS) is designed to protect prospective buyers of used cars and trucks from concealed vehicle histories.** Created by federal law, NMVTIS is the only publicly available system in the country that requires all insurance carriers, auto recyclers, junk and salvage yards, and states to report vehicle history information. An NMVTIS vehicle history report provides information on the five key indicators associated with preventing vehicle-related fraud and theft:

- ✓ current state of title and last title date
- ✓ brand history, a descriptive label assigned by states to indicate a vehicle's current or prior state, e.g., "junk," "salvage," "flood"
- ✓ odometer reading
- ✓ total loss history
- ✓ salvage history

If a vehicle has a brand, total loss, or salvage history, then the consumer is warned that the vehicle may be unsafe (an NMVTIS report does not include repair histories, recall information, and other care and maintenance data available in alternative vehicle history reports).

Shop smart. Make sure you obtain an independent vehicle inspection and have all the information about a vehicle before you buy.

For more information about NMVTIS, visit [www.vehiclehistory.gov](http://www.vehiclehistory.gov)