

Car Corner

Don't Drive Damaged Goods

(NAPSA)—More than 725,000 vehicles driven on U.S. roads every day may be dangerous, according to new research from Carfax. These vehicles were damaged so severely in an accident, by fire or flood that DMVs across the country require permanent title marks to warn people about the damage. Still, thousands are back on the road in every state, and worse, many of the owners may have no idea they're driving a rebuilt wreck.

That's because some unscrupulous sellers resort to what's known as "title washing"; that is, they alter the car's documents. These criminals patch badly damaged cars back together, erase documented evidence of the damage and resell them to unsuspecting buyers in other states. Many of these cars are sold on free online classifieds sites, in busy parking lots and other high-traffic areas.

"I was shopping for a car for my daughter and arranged to purchase one off Craigslist that looked immaculate," said car buyer Scott Liker. "The seller asked if I could pay cash and told me the vehicle had a clean title. I went to Carfax and was shocked to find it was issued a salvage title out of Florida. Within days, the vehicle was titled in Tennessee and a month later was in Missouri, now with a clean title. I was shaking, because I had just dodged a bullet." North Carolina, Mississippi, New Jersey, California and Georgia have the highest number of these potentially dangerous vehicles.



Thousands of people are driving potentially unsafe vehicles—but you don't have to be among them.

Crooks also seem to be moving and reselling these vehicles in cities along the I-40 corridor, the research suggests.

"Hundreds of thousands of people driving unsafe vehicles is a serious threat to public safety," said Larry Gamache, Carfax communications director. "In addition, anyone duped into buying one often pays thousands more than the car's really worth. Insisting on a vehicle history report and mechanic's inspection first will help you avoid unknowingly buying a car with major problems that crooks made disappear on paper."

You can shop for used cars with confidence at www.carfax.com, where every car listed for sale comes with a free Carfax Report.

Victims of title washing can contact their state's Consumer Affairs Department or Attorney General's office for help.