

Protecting Your Finances

Rebuilt Wrecks Emerging Threat To Car Buyers

(NAPSA)—Buying a rebuilt—but not properly repaired—wreck of a car could wreck your finances.

A new study by Carfax shows that millions of cars severely damaged in major accidents have been rebuilt and are up for sale. Over the last five years, the number of salvaged cars on the market has increased nationwide by more than 50 percent.

This problem is more widespread than previously thought. Forecasters predict that more than 40 million used cars will be purchased this year, making the used-car market a target-rich environment for scam artists.

Experts estimate that more than 5 million cars annually are deemed salvage after severe accidents. More than half of these cars are resold, many by sellers who intentionally hide their damaged past.

Some of the common problems associated with previously wrecked vehicles may include:

- Title washing. Title documents may be altered to remove a salvage brand and obtain a clear title from another state.

- Air bag fraud. Scam artists are known to replace deployed air bags with phony or nonworking air bags to cut costs.

- Structure/frame damage. As little as 8mm can compromise a car's structural integrity, which may also affect many of the car's safety features.

- Odometer rollbacks. The odometer may also be rolled back



When buying a used car, make sure you're aware of any previous damage and whether proper repairs were made.

to further inflate the perceived value of the vehicle.

- Car clipping. Some rebuilt wrecks are actually two different cars welded together.

Buying a salvaged car may not be a bad investment, but you must make sure you're aware of any prior damage and, more important, see that the proper repairs were made. Many salvage vehicles are rebuilt properly and will run safely again.

However, scammers can alter title documents and make cheap cosmetic repairs to others so they look as good as new on paper and in person. Experts recommend getting a Carfax Vehicle History Report that qualifies for the Carfax Buyback Guarantee and have a mechanic thoroughly inspect the vehicle prior to purchase. For more information, visit www.carfax.com.