

# Consumer Alert!

## Steering Clear Of Air Bag Fraud

(NAPSA)—If you're in the market for a used car, it could pay to watch out for air bag fraud.

Air bag fraud involves replacing a damaged air bag system with a nonfunctioning "dummy" air bag. These dummy systems are often stolen or salvaged units and may not match the particular make and model of your car. Victims of air bag fraud have even reported finding paper towels, packing peanuts, old shoes or virtually anything else that can fill the hole left by the missing air bag.

### A Growing Problem

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), nearly 20,000 lives have been saved by air bags deploying in an accident. However, industry experts estimate that currently, as many as one out of every 25 previously damaged vehicles inspected had nonfunctional air bags. Unchecked, this growing scam can threaten the safety of unsuspecting victims who might never know until it's too late.

Fortunately, there are ways to protect yourself and your passengers. Try these tips:

- Ask for or order a Carfax Vehicle History Report to check for salvage or junk titles, accidents in the vehicle's past or "air bag deployed" notations. If any of these red flags shows up, the air bag may have been deployed and you should have it closely inspected. Remember, even if it remained undeployed, the air bag system may still have been affected by a crash.



**Victims of air bag fraud have found everything from paper towels to packing peanuts stuffed into the air bag compartments of the steering wheel or dashboard.**

- Take the vehicle to a certified air bag mechanic for inspection prior to purchase to ensure a properly working air bag system.

- Turn on the ignition. The air bag indicator light should appear momentarily and then go out. If the indicator light remains on or flashes, this may indicate that an air bag system problem exists. Take the vehicle to a qualified mechanic for further inspection.

- If the air bag light never comes on, it's highly likely the air bag is missing and the bulb has been removed. Also, air bag lights may also not come on if the previous owner had an on-off switch installed. If you face this situation, ask the owner or dealer to provide a copy of the NHTSA letter authorizing the switch and have the air bag turned back on.

For more information and a free air bag deployment report, visit [www.carfax.com/airbag](http://www.carfax.com/airbag).