



CAR CARE CORNER

Protect Yourself From Water-Damaged Vehicles

(NAPSA)—Savvy consumers in the market for pre-owned vehicles can protect themselves from flood-damaged autos. All it takes is a little research and a trustworthy mechanic.

Rain, thunderstorms, swelling rivers and seasonal hurricanes all contribute to flood disasters that can mean serious damage to vehicles. Water from 1999's Hurricane Floyd, for example, damaged more than 75,000 vehicles—over half of which ended up back on the road.

As flooding continues to rise throughout the U.S., industry experts expect the number of flood-damaged cars on the market will steadily and significantly increase.

Auto industry analysts caution that the risk of buying a flood-damaged vehicle is not limited to flood-ravaged areas. Damaged cars are often repaired cosmetically, moved to other parts of the country, and made available to unsuspecting consumers.

To help consumers avoid water-logged wrecks, Carfax, the nation's leading provider of vehicle history information, offers these tips for uncovering the truth about a pre-owned vehicle:

- **Check**—Check the trunk, glove compartment, dashboard and below seats for signs of water damage such as sand, mud or rust.

- **Examine**—Examine upholstery and carpeting closely. If it doesn't match the interior or fits loosely, it may have been replaced.

- **Turn-on and Test**—Turn the ignition key and make sure all accessory, warning, interior lights and gauges work. Test headlights, turn signals, radio and other fea-



Auto consumers should check used vehicles for signs of water damage before they buy.

tures several times to be sure they work properly.

- **Flex**—Flex some of the wires beneath the dashboard. Wires that were wet tend to crack when bent.

- **Smell**—Take a deep breath and smell for musty odors or mildew.

- **Visit**—Always visit a trusted mechanic for a pre-purchase inspection.

- **Ask**—Ask to see a detailed vehicle history report. A vehicle history report can reveal many hidden problems in a vehicle's past, including flood titles and whether a vehicle has been titled/registered in at-risk areas during flood and hurricane seasons.

Consumers can also ask the used car seller for a report. If the seller does not offer a report, consumers—using the 17-digit Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) available on the dashboard of all vehicles—can run a report themselves.

For more information, visit www.carfax.com.