

# The Active Consumer

## Is Your Car's Digital Odometer Telling The Truth?

(NAPSA)—Ten billion dollars a year. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration that's how much odometer fraud costs Americans each year. Many people don't realize this includes digital odometer fraud.

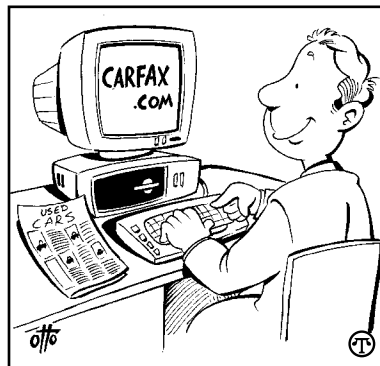
It was thought that the introduction of digital odometers would eliminate odometer tampering, but it is as easy, if not easier, to alter a digital odometer. Unscrupulous people can even use relatively inexpensive software and devices—available for sale legally via the Internet for recalibrating faulty odometers—to commit this fraud.

Here's what happens. An unsuspecting car buyer—who isn't aware that digital odometers can be altered, buys a vehicle with a digital odometer believing the mileage has to be accurate. The seller who rolled back the odometer makes an additional profit of approximately 10-cents per mile—for example, a 20,000 mile decrease in mileage can increase the selling price by \$2,000. Then, that unsuspecting buyer can end up passing on that expense—and committing odometer fraud unknowingly—when he or she sells the vehicle.

Unfortunately, tampered with digital odometers are even harder to detect than traditional mechanical odometers, so here are a few tips:

- Check the tires. If the odometer on your car shows 20,000 or less it should have the original tires.
- Compare the mileage on the odometer with the mileage on the car's oil change record.
- Is the wear on the car's brake pedal consistent with the miles displayed on the odometer?

Consumers can also take advantage of a service that tracks



**Using the Internet, it's possible to track the history of just about any used car.**

the history of used cars through the VIN number.

The VIN number is a 17-character identification number found on the dashboard and title of every car in the United States.

Since 1986, a company called Carfax has been offering reports on the history of individual automobiles.

In addition to a car's complete mileage history, these reports can reveal:

- whether or not the car has been in an accident,
- if it has been subjected to flood damage,
- whether or not the vehicle has been used commercially as a taxi or rental car.

The report also tracks the mileage of the car over time, so it can be easier to spot odometer rollbacks.

The company's data base has access to over 170 sources for information, including motor vehicle departments and auto auctions in the U.S. and Canada.

To learn more, visit the Web site at [www.carfax.com](http://www.carfax.com).