

Motor Vehicle Fraud

The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles (FLHSMV) is committed to educating consumers on safe vehicle buying practices. Purchasing a vehicle is a major investment and many consumers may not be aware of the several ways they can protect themselves against fraudulent vehicle sales. Consumers should do as much research as possible to protect their investment. If it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

There are three main types of motor vehicle fraud:

- **Odometer fraud** consists of changing or altering the mileage reading on a vehicle to falsely reflect lower mileage.
- **Title fraud** occurs when an individual alters a title in a way that misrepresents the true condition of a vehicle or provides false information to obtain a motor vehicle title.
- **Vehicle cloning** is an elaborate scheme that involves stolen VIN numbers, counterfeit VIN tags and fraudulent ownership documents.

For more information, visit www.flhsmv.gov.



If you feel that you have been the victim of motor vehicle fraud, please contact the **FLHSMV Motor Vehicle Fraud Unit**:

Email: dmv-enforcement@flhsmv.gov

Phone: 850-617-2907

If you have information on any operation or incident involving motor vehicle fraud or individuals involved in this crime, please contact the **FHP Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence (BCII)**. You may remain anonymous and your information kept confidential.

North Florida BCII: 850-617-2302

South Florida BCII: 305-513-3458

For more information, visit: www.flhsmv.gov/florida-highway-patrol



Protecting yourself from *Odometer Fraud.*

Federal and Florida laws exist to protect consumers from odometer fraud. It is a felony to alter, disconnect or fail to connect an odometer of a vehicle to reflect a lower mileage than the vehicle has actually been driven. It is also illegal to knowingly provide a falsified odometer statement.

Odometer fraud can have a significant financial impact a significant financial impact on a consumer. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that more than 450,000 vehicles are sold each year with false odometer readings, costing U.S. vehicle buyers over \$1 billion in increased costs for vehicles with rolled back odometers. Further loss to the consumer may include:

- Increased sales tax due to the inflated sales price;
- Increased insurance cost due to the lower mileage;
- Increased maintenance and repair costs; and
- Decreased vehicle safety.

Before purchasing a pre-owned vehicle, check the VIN at www.flhsmv.gov.

Before buying a pre-owned vehicle, look for signs of wear on the brake and gas pedals and seats. Cars with low mileage likely will not have these signs of wear. If the car has less than 20,000 miles, it should not need a replacement set of tires.

Most importantly, check the vehicle VIN to ensure that the odometer reading recorded on the title reflects the reading displayed on the odometer. The mileage recorded may be designated “actual” or “not actual.” If the status is “not actual,” it indicates that the odometer may have been repaired or replaced. Florida law requires that repaired or replaced odometers be documented and disclosed on the vehicle title on a written notice attached to the driver side door frame of the vehicle.

If the vehicle is titled in Florida, consumers can check the VIN free of charge on the FLHSMV Motor Vehicle Information Check at www.flhsmv.gov. There are also several online motor vehicle history reports that provide useful information for a fee, including whether the vehicle was ever reported as stolen, salvaged, damaged or flooded.

For more information, visit www.flhsmv.gov.

Title Fraud

Title fraud occurs when a person alters a vehicle title to misrepresent the true condition of a vehicle or when an individual provides false information to obtain a vehicle title, including forgery. **Consumers should never keep their title in the vehicle.**

Before purchasing a vehicle, verify the seller's information on their driver license or ID card to ensure it matches the name on the title. If the title is paper, check for signs of tampering. If the title is electronic, verify ownership by visiting the FLHSMV Motor Vehicle Information Check at www.flhsmv.gov.

FLHSMV encourages consumers to take advantage of the electronic title service to reduce title fraud and receive faster lien satisfaction notification.

Vehicle Cloning

Vehicle cloning involves stolen VIN numbers and counterfeit VIN tags and ownership documents. Follow these tips to avoid this scam:

- Beware of a vehicle being sold for substantially less than comparable makes and models.
- Check the VIN plate on the dashboard for evidence of tampering.
- Verify the vehicle VIN through the FLHSMV Motor Vehicle Information Check at www.flhsmv.gov.