

TROOPERS PROVIDE GUIDELINES REGARDING ONLINE AUTO SALES

With the rise of online auto sales from sources such as Craigslist and Facebook Marketplace, the Delaware State Police Auto Theft Unit is receiving a rising number of consumer concerns from individuals who have purchased vehicles and have experienced problems with documents such as titles and ownership papers.

With this in mind, the Auto Theft Unit would like to inform the public of the following guidelines when dealing with possible “not so reputable” sellers.

* Always make sure you know exactly who you’re dealing with, and make sure they have a title to the vehicle in their name. Ask to examine the title before any money exchanges hands. Check the front and the back of the title, and make sure the VIN (vehicle identification number) of the vehicle exactly matches the title. Also, ensure the title has not been signed over to other persons already. If there’s other persons or businesses listed on the back, the title will not be able to be transferred to a new owner without additional documentation, if at all.

* If the person you’re negotiating with states that he is “affiliated” with an auto dealer, you should be conducting all business with that person at that dealership. So called “street corner” deals and parking lot deals are a bad omen and should be avoided.

* There are several on-line sources to check the history of any vehicle you are considering to purchase. One such source is www.NICB.org (National Insurance Crime Bureau). On their main page, at the lower left, is a section called "VinCheck". There, you can enter the VIN of a vehicle and determine if it's listed as "stolen" or if it's been listed as a salvage vehicle. This service is free to the public, but there are many others, such as "Carfax", that charge a fee for a more detailed report.

* If you decide to make a purchase of a vehicle, make sure that you receive a properly endorsed title and a Bill of Sale that contains the following information: Date of purchase, the purchase price, the seller's full name, address and telephone, your name and address and a full description of the vehicle including the VIN. Both the seller and the purchaser should sign the bill of sale. If the seller cannot deliver a title to you at the time of transfer, DO NOT complete the purchase.

* Special note regarding salvage vehicles, as listed on the title/certificate. There are many laws and state regulations regarding the re-titling of salvage vehicles. If the vehicle in question has already been repaired, it is most likely the current owner's responsibility to obtain a new title to the vehicle before transfer to a new owner. If you do decide to purchase a salvage vehicle that has not been repaired, then you are required to make the necessary repairs to the vehicle before you can obtain a new title to the vehicle, and the vehicle MUST be inspected by the DSP Auto Theft Unit PRIOR to the titling process. (See the DE DMV web page for salvage vehicle procedures)

* Special note regarding trailers. Make sure a VIN is clearly visible on the trailer. Most trailers will have a manufacturer's label with pertinent data about the trailer, including the VIN. Make sure the owner has a title to the trailer in their name. If they do not, it is their responsibility to obtain a title prior to transfer, as it is unlawful to sell a vehicle without a title. If any of these issues become apparent when shopping for a trailer, it is best to avoid the purchase.

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Presented by Public Information Officer, Master Corporal Derek Underwood

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