

# We're Looking Out For You



Pinellas County Consumer Protection  
[www.pinellascounty.org/consumer](http://www.pinellascounty.org/consumer)  
(727) 464-6200



Water damage can be hard to detect, but there are some telltale signs you should be aware of:

1. To reduce the chance getting stuck with a flood-damaged vehicle, use reputable dealers with good sales history of standing behind their vehicles.
2. Before you buy a vehicle be sure to test drive it. Drive the vehicle on different terrains and different times of day. If it's a flood-damaged vehicle the electrical system may have been compromised.
3. To make sure you are getting a good vehicle, one of the most important things you can do is have it inspected by a reliable and licensed mechanic. Don't rely on the promises made by the seller.
4. Use your senses. With flood damaged vehicles there are some telltale signs: the smell of mold or mildew, debris (grass, mud or sand) left behind after the water receded, check for moisture in headlights or under the carpets. Seatbelts that sound gritty or are sticking could be a sign that there is sand or mud inside the latch.
5. Inspect the fabric in the vehicle, from the carpet to the upholstery. Look for water stains or discoloration to the carpet or seats. Question, if it's an old vehicle but the carpet looks new, if the upholstery doesn't match or lineup, or if only certain sections have been replaced.
6. When metal is exposed to water for an extended period of time it rusts and corrodes. Look for signs of corrosion both inside and out. Inspect the vehicle for rust on screws, door hinges, springs, latches, or brackets. Corrosion continues to eat away at metals long after the car is dry.
7. Check the oil. Changes in the color or viscosity maybe a sign that water has gotten into the engine's oil.
8. That's a good deal...or is it? If priced below market value, there may be a reason. A discounted price is usually an indication that the dealer is trying to sell the car quickly. So if it's too good to be true, it probably is.
9. Get a history report Even if the seller has done an expert job of concealing damage from water, the vehicle data report should be able to list any accidents or natural disasters that the vehicle was involved in which will make the buyers job a little bit easier.
10. AS-IS, means just that. You are purchasing the vehicle in its current condition, despite oral statements made about the vehicle. The dealer holds no responsibility for any repairs, you are responsible for all repairs.