



Consumer Reports: Don't Rely on Used-Car-History Reports

CR investigation in July issue reveals some damaged vehicles got 'clean' reports

YONKERS, N.Y., June 1 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- *Consumer Reports'* investigation of used-car-history reports revealed that many reports returned "clean" results for damaged cars.

To test the veracity of history reports, *CR* ordered them for dozens of damaged vehicles advertised online. The vehicles' owners disclosed serious dents or other accident-related damage along with vehicle identification numbers (VINs) and photos.

Some damaged cars got "clean" reports sometimes from all five services: Carfax, Autocheck, the free VINCheck from the National Insurance Crime Bureau, and two services providing information from the federal government's National Motor Vehicle Title Information Systems database. In most cases, the titles for those vehicles were not branded with the word "salvage" or any other term to indicate that they had been in a wreck.

"Salvage" or similar branding on the vehicle title, is required by many states for most vehicles with extensive damage. But even extensively damaged vehicles can escape the "salvage branding." That can occur, for example, if the car isn't covered by insurance or it was owned by a rental-car company.

The full report is available in the July issue of *Consumer Reports*, on newsstands June 2 and online at www.ConsumerReports.org.

"Many dealerships provide free history reports to consumers," said Anthony Giorgianni, Associate Editor, *Consumer Reports*. "The reports provide useful information. But it's what they can miss that should worry you."

Clean-title wrecks are popular at auctions because buyers can repair the vehicles and then resell them to unsuspecting customers. Based on *CR's* findings, Carfax says it will begin looking at online advertisements for such vehicles and see if it's possible to include the results. Consumers Union, the nonprofit publisher of *Consumer Reports*, would like to see all commercial history-reports services follow that practice.

How to check out a used car:

- **Have the vehicle inspected.** Before you buy a used car, take it to an independent mechanic to have it checked for any evidence of prior damage.
- **Don't skip the test drive.** Make note of unusual squeaks and rattles. Check the backs of body panels and door jambs for paint overspray, a signal that the car might have had body work.
- **Ask the seller for a history report.** If the report isn't recent or you suspect it has missing or fabricated information, verify it with the service.
- **Be redundant.** Just because one report is clean, another might not be. If you are not provided with a report from the seller, check with the free or inexpensive services first. Remember, even clean reports from all services don't guarantee that the vehicle doesn't have damage or other problems.

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