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## Overview on Cars Damaged by Flood Waters

As a result of the flooding associated with hurricanes and other severe storms, hundreds of thousands of vehicles sustain severe water damage in each weather event. Such water damage can make a vehicle's electrical system, including airbag sensors, prone to failure. Following each hurricane, many states see flood-damaged vehicles enter their used vehicle markets for sale, titling, or registration.

- Though not all states are directly affected by a specific hurricane, flood-damaged cars can potentially wind up on the market across the country. Every state could ultimately be affected and should be on the lookout for flood-damaged vehicles.
- The Department of Justice's National Motor Vehicle Title Information System (NMVTIS) is designed to protect consumers from fraud and unsafe vehicles and to keep stolen vehicles from being resold. NMVTIS is also a tool that assists states and law enforcement in deterring and preventing title fraud and other crimes. While most states participate in the program by contributing title and brand data to include flood damages vehicles, there are a few states not contributing data nor are they checking the system prior to retitling an out of state vehicles, therefore will not be able to access data that participating states have contributed.
- NMVTIS Junk, Salvage and Insurance Total Loss (JSI) program is a way to report and identify vehicles deemed junk/salvage and insurance total losses within NMVTIS. Under the NMVTIS JSI program insurance companies are required, by federal law, to report to NMVTIS any vehicle that they deemed to be a total loss. It is possible that some insurers may determine that some of the affected vehicles may be repairable and will not be deemed a total loss, however, if they are deemed salvage, other businesses such as salvage auctions are also required to report these vehicles to NMVTIS.
- The requirement to report to NMVTIS is on a 30-day cycle, therefore, it is possible that flood-damaged vehicles may appear for titling or registration, and a NMVTIS check may not show a report by an insurer if they had not yet reported it to NMVTIS. [The Department of Justice is reaching out to the various JSI program stakeholders asking for their prompt, timely and complete reporting](#) so that all users of NMVTIS information can make informed decisions regarding a vehicle's history and, in the interest of consumers, the vehicle's fair market value and safety.
- What can states do?
  - Encourage prospective purchasers of used vehicles to conduct a vehicle history check to determine the vehicle's prior history, if it was from one of the flood affected states, **and** conduct an independent inspection of the vehicle.
  - Take extra pre-cautions to identify and brand flood-damaged vehicles **and** to query NMVTIS before issuing a title.

## **Relevant AAMVA Experts**

**Vivienne Cameron, Senior Director, Special Projects** One of Ms. Cameron's key responsibilities is the operational management and administration of NMVTIS on behalf of AAMVA, the system operator. Her areas of responsibility are the operational management of all aspects of NMVTIS including, the state, consumer access, law enforcement and reporting to NMVTIS, junk/salvage yards and insurance companies programs. Prior to taking on NMVTIS, in a full time capacity, Vivienne was responsible for the oversight of AAMVA's, driver, vehicle and law enforcement programs services to the AAMVA membership. Before joining AAMVA in 2004, Ms. Cameron served with Ministry of Transportation, Province of Ontario, Canada for over 22 years, where she was responsible for the operational policy development and administration for the driver and vehicle programs areas. She is also a recipient of AAMVA Harvard School of Government Scholarship.

**Cathie Curtis, Director, Vehicle Programs** is responsible for the overall operation of the vehicle programs such as title, registration, dealer licensing and other related programs and serves as the lead program expert of emerging vehicle technology. Prior to joining AAMVA in 2012, Ms. Curtis managed the vehicle programs at the Maine Bureau of Motor Vehicle for 27 years and for an additional five years served as the Deputy Secretary of State for the Bureau of Motor Vehicles.

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