

BUYING AN “AS-IS” USED CAR

Trap

Angela in Lake Park was excited about buying her first car. She did not have very much money, and her credit was not very good. A friend recommended a “Buy Here – Pay Here” used car dealer. Angela picked out a red 2002 sports car with rims and flashy spoilers. The salesperson said, “This is a great car that will last forever.” Angela signed the paperwork, which included an “AS-IS” agreement, and drove off. An hour later the car had stalled on the shoulder of I-95. When she called the dealer, she was told the car had no warranty, and there was nothing they could do. How did Angela get into this mess?

Tips

Most older used automobiles do not carry warranties. While the federally required “AS-IS” disclosure is good, there are no guarantees from the dealer whatsoever should the vehicle develop a mechanical problem after it is driven off the lot. Here are some ways to avoid problems when buying an “AS-IS” vehicle:

- First, check out prospective dealers. Research dealer complaints by calling Consumer Affairs 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray 888-852-7362 toll free). Also contact the Florida Division of Motor Vehicles (which licenses dealerships) at 561-640-6820 to verify the license status of a dealer.
- Research makes and models. Vehicles age differently, and some have lower dependability rates than others. Don't buy a car simply on color or styling.
- Test drive the vehicle, and have it inspected by a reliable mechanic. There are many warning signs a licensed mechanic can determine to steer you away from the wrong car.
- Request a CarFax Vehicle History Report (or pay for one yourself). This report may provide you valuable information on the mechanical history of a used car.
- Ask the dealer for a 30-day warranty on mechanical problems. Even a 30-day warranty could save you considerable money on repair costs.
- Never rely on verbal promises or representations from the salesperson. Get everything in writing. “AS-IS” means “AS-IS”!

For more information, call Palm Beach County Consumer Affairs at 561-712-6600 (Boca/Delray residents call 1-888-852-7362 toll free)