

## Beware of “Hot” Used Car Deals

Not all stolen cars are stripped for parts. Many are resold to unknowing and unsuspecting buyers. If you knowingly buy a stolen car, you can be arrested. If you buy a stolen car unknowingly, you could lose the car and your money. Avoid becoming the car thief’s second victim by following these tips.

- Be suspicious of any deal that seems “too good to be true.”
- When buying from a private individual, make sure the title and registration match the name and address of the person selling the car.
- Be cautious of a seller with no fixed address, place of employment, or phone number.
- Ask the seller for references about past financing and insurance on the vehicle. Verify the information with the bank, finance company, or agent.
- Ensure the Vehicle Information Number plate on the automobile’s dash is present, secure, and has no loose rivets.
- Check to ensure the VIN plate has not been repainted and the numbers stamped in the plate appear to be the original factory numbers.
- Ensure the VIN plate rivets are original. All 1970 and newer autos produced in North America have stainless steel “rosette” rivets with six petals and a hole in the middle. They are difficult to scratch with a knife.
- Thieves may remove the VIN plate and replace it with one from a similar wrecked vehicle. If in doubt about plate authenticity, check with a new car dealer who handles the same model, or contact a law enforcement agency.
- The VIN on the dash must match the VIN on the registration, title, and federal safety inspection sticker on the driver’s door.
- If the VIN plate is scratched, bent or missing rivets, tampering may have occurred.
- Make sure the federal safety inspection sticker, located on the driver’s door or door jamb, is securely in place and none of the numbers appear to be tampered with.
- Beware of a loose dashboard.
- An excessively loose ignition switch may indicate tampering. Check the switch for chisel or pull marks.
- Be wary of a fresh paint job on a newer vehicle. This may indicate an attempt to change the car’s identity.
- Check the inspection and license plate stickers to be sure they are current and issued by the same state.
- If the seller provides you with only re-made keys, not original manufacturer’s keys, for a newer model, be suspicious.
- Titles and registrations are frequently counterfeited. Therefore, demand the title before paying, and make sure it matches the registration. By completing all paperwork at the time of sale, you avoid giving the thief extra time to obtain fraudulent documents.
- Question the seller if the registration was recently issued on an older vehicle.
- Compare the engine identification numbers with all other numbers to ensure a match.
- Be cautious of new license plates on an old car, or new plate bolts on an older plate.