



FAIR TRADING COMMISSION

Guideline on Purchasing Motor Vehicles

The Fair Trading Commission (FTC) continues to receive complaints from owners of new and used motor vehicles regarding dealers' inability to provide satisfactory resolution to problems with their vehicles. The FTC urges consumers to be vigilant and proactive when purchasing motor vehicles. Accordingly, here are the top six steps individuals should complete before purchasing a motor vehicle:

1) Research the Vehicle

Know the vehicle which you are considering buying, whether it be new or used. Search for vehicle reviews and information in motor magazines. This may provide information on the vehicle's performance, common problems associated with the model, or whether the model was recalled. In addition, ensure that you understand the total cost of owning the vehicle; in particular know the estimated cost of insurance and maintenance.

2) Confirm the Vehicle's Model Year

Regardless of where the car was manufactured, it is important to confirm the model year of the motor vehicle as stated on the relevant documents and that it accords with the interpretation of the local industry. For example, a motor vehicle that is represented as a 2007 model may in fact be a 2004 model. Consumers are advised to seek the expertise of more than one reputable motor vehicle valuator to obtain information on the history of the motor vehicle, including the model year. Further, consumers may consult vehicle databases to obtain information such as whether the vehicle has been modified, or whether it was written off by an insurance company. Two of the more popular databases are CarFax and CarProof.

3) Investigate the Fuel Requirements for the Vehicle

Since 2007, motor vehicles manufactured in several countries, including Japan, the United States and European countries, have been mandated by local environment protection agencies to produce vehicles powered by "cleaner" fuels; and accordingly, vehicles manufactured since 2007 may be equipped with newer engine technologies to reduce exhaust emissions. Manufacturers of diesel-powered vehicles have specified that fuels of a specific type and quality must be used to operate their vehicles. For example, they may state that diesel fuel with sulphur content by weight of at most **10 ppm** must be used; and that failure to do so may result in a significant reduction in the life of the vehicle's engine. Consumers should be mindful that the sulphur content of the fuel that is available in Jamaica may not conform to the standard recommended for these newer model vehicles.

4) Inspect Your Vehicle

Consumers should carefully inspect the vehicle before making a deposit. Seek the assistance of a reputable mechanic to check for *welds, colour variation, cracks in the windshield, loose panels, uneven seams, computer malfunction etc.*, as these may be signs that the vehicle was involved in an accident or possibly flood damage. Damaged vehicles and especially those which have been “cut and joined” may have had their structural integrity compromised. Check the vehicle’s condition and how it performs – take it for a test drive.

5) Check For The Availability of Spare Parts

Confirm that your dealer has ready access to parts in stock to repair the vehicle and that relevant expertise and skills to effect repairs and service are available. It is a requirement that dealers of new and used vehicles hold a spare parts inventory equivalent to 10% of their current vehicle stock.

6) Read The Warranty/Sale Agreement

When purchasing a motor vehicle ensure that you understand what is covered under the terms of the warranty and the details of entitlements in the event that it has to be returned for repairs. Read all documents carefully, regarding the transaction before you sign the sale agreement. If you sign to an “*As Is, Where Is*” statement, then the dealer is not legally obligated to assist you should the vehicle malfunction after it is taken off the car lot. If the vehicle malfunctions, it will be your responsibility to fix it.