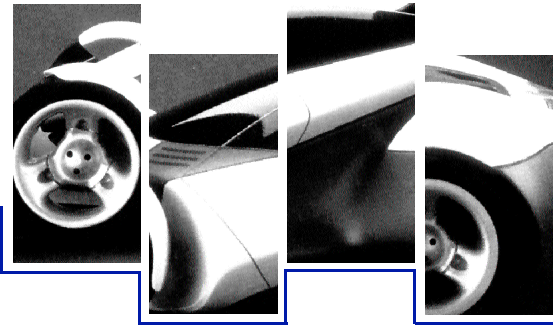


# USA FACTS

S U M M E R 1 9 9 6



## ODOMETER FRAUD: TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS

The odometer indicates the number of miles a vehicle has been driven. Odometer fraud occurs when an odometer is *rolled back* or *disconnected*. Fraud also occurs when *incorrect information* is given about the accuracy of the odometer reading.

### The Problem

Odometer fraud is a major problem for consumers. Some late model used cars have odometers that have been turned back. Any vehicle that has been driven a high number of miles but is only a few years old is a candidate for odometer fraud, especially odometer rollback.

A federal law prohibits odometer rollbacks and requires correct reporting of mileage when selling a used car, but a cautious buyer is the best defense against this form of consumer fraud.

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### Odometer Fraud is Costly

Because car value goes down as miles driven goes up, you could pay an extra \$2,000 over the true value for a

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used car with a rolled back odometer--and you could pay much more.

### Federal Odometer Law

The federal odometer law is intended to protect you from odometer fraud. It makes odometer tampering a felony.

The federal law requires that the seller of a vehicle state in writing on the title whether the odometer reading is the true mileage, the mileage is in excess of 99,999 (i.e., the odometer has turned over); or is not the true mileage.

### When an Odometer Breaks

When an odometer breaks and is repaired or replaced and cannot be adjusted to the true mileage, the odometer must be set at zero. A sticker indicating the true mileage before service and the date of service must be attached to the left door frame. When the vehicle is sold, the disclosure statement must indicate the odometer error.

### How Can You Tell Whether an Odometer Has Been Altered?

You can check the vehicle for evidence of tampering (marks on the odometer or misaligned numbers) and check the mileage entered on oil stickers, inspection stickers, and tire warranty cards. Also, the overall condition of the vehicle may provide a clue.

The odometer reading must be entered on the vehicle title. Check the reading on previous titles to determine if and when any alterations occurred. Your department of motor vehicles should have previous titles on file.

Try to contact former owners if you suspect tampering. To find out if the vehicle was owned by a resident of your state, your department of motor vehicles should have the name and address.

# ABOUT ODOMETER FRAUD

TRAFFIC SAFETY TIPS

## When Buying a Used Car

Be sure the seller has certified the odometer reading in writing. Be careful if the seller tells you the odometer reading is incorrect. If you have any concern, it might be wise to have the car inspected by an impartial auto mechanic. In fact, this is a good practice when buying any used car. Also, beware of buying a vehicle with low mileage that was formerly a leased vehicle. Leased vehicles are driven an average of 30,000 miles a year, and a high percentage have their odometers rolled back when they enter the used car market.

## When Selling a Car

When you sell a car, you must certify the odometer reading in writing. If you are not sure the odometer reading is accurate, so indicate on the disclosure statement.

## What To Do If You Are Victimized

You can consult an attorney about the advisability of suing for civil damages. If you win, the court will award you \$1,500 or three times the amount of damages, whichever is greater, plus court costs and reasonable attorney fees. But, you must be able to prove that the odometer mileage was

misrepresented, who was responsible for the misrepresentation, and that there was intent to defraud.

You can also inform your state attorney general who can bring civil actions on behalf of consumers.

You can report suspected odometer tampering to the federal government by calling the Auto Safety Hotline and completing the enclosed Vehicle Owners Questionnaire. (See details below.) The federal government is prohibited from undertaking legal action for individual consumers, but may follow your lead to start a criminal investigation. ■

## IF YOU THINK YOUR VEHICLE HAS A SAFETY PROBLEM, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU

### AUTO SAFETY HOTLINE (800) 424-9393

If you think that your vehicle has a safety problem, you can assist the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) by completing and mailing back the Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire (VOQ) included with this fact sheet, or calling the Auto Safety Hotline.

The toll-free Hotline number, (800) 424-9393, can be reached from anywhere in the United States. If you are calling from the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area, the number is (202) 366-0123. A Spanish-speaking operator is available weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., Eastern time. The Hotline is available to the hearing impaired through a teleprinter (TTY)

number, (800) 424-9153. In the Washington, D.C. area the TTY number is (202) 366-7800.

If it is determined that a safety defect exists, the manufacturer has to fix the problem at no cost to the owner.

If there are any documents relevant to your case, including copies of repair bills and letters to the manufacturer, attach them to your completed VOQ.

If you are not sure of any information requested in the VOQ, leave the box blank. But we must have the Vehicle Identification Number

(VIN) to process your questionnaire. The VIN is a 17-digit number that can be seen through the front windshield on the driver's side of the dashboard. When reporting a tire problem, the DOT identification (located on the sidewall) is needed.

The VOQ asks if you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of your report to the manufacturer. If so, check YES on the VOQ and sign and date it. When we send the report to the manufacturer, it often results in a satisfactory solution of individual problems. But NHTSA cannot order corrective action unless the vehicle or item of equipment is determined to have a defect and a safety recall campaign is conducted.

Check out our home page for information on a variety of vehicle safety topics.  
<http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/>



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National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



U.S. Department of Transportation  
National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

Auto Safety Hotline

# Vehicle Owner's Questionnaire

NATIONWIDE 1-800-424-9393  
DC METRO AREA (202) 366-0123

## FOR AGENCY USE ONLY

Date Received

Od-or \_\_\_\_  
rt-dt \_\_\_\_  
od-rt \_\_\_\_  
up-ltr \_\_\_\_

Reference No.

### OWNER INFORMATION (Type or Print)

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Street No. \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. No. \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Day Time Telephone Number  
( )

Do you authorize NHTSA to provide a copy of this report to the manufacturer of your vehicle?  YES  NO  
In the absence of an authorization, NHTSA WILL NOT provide your name and address to the vehicle manufacturer.

Signature of Owner \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

### VEHICLE INFORMATION

Vehicle Ident. No. (VIN.) <small>(Located at bottom of windshield on driver's side)</small>	Vehicle Make	Vehicle Model	Vehicle Year	Current Odometer Reading

Purchase Date	Dealer's Name _____	Engine Size (CID/CC/L) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Turbo
<input type="checkbox"/> New <input type="checkbox"/> Used	City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____	No. Cylinders _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Diesel
			<input type="checkbox"/> Gas
			<input type="checkbox"/> Fuel Injection

Transmission Type	Antilock Brakes	Restraint System	Cruise Control	Drivetrain	Body Style
<input type="checkbox"/> Manual <input type="checkbox"/> Automatic	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Driverside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> Passengerside Airbag <input type="checkbox"/> 3-Point Belt	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	<input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Rear <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Wheel	<input type="checkbox"/> Hatch Back <input type="checkbox"/> Van <input type="checkbox"/> Pick Up Truck <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____
		<input type="checkbox"/> Motorbelt <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Point Belt			<input type="checkbox"/> Stawag <input type="checkbox"/> 4-Door <input type="checkbox"/> 2-Door

### FAILED COMPONENT(S)/PART(S) INFORMATION

Component	Part Name(s)	Location	Failed Part(s)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Left <input type="checkbox"/> Front <input type="checkbox"/> Right <input type="checkbox"/> Rear	<input type="checkbox"/> Original <input type="checkbox"/> Replacement
No. of Failures	Date(s) of Failure(s) _____ Mileage at Failure(s) _____ Vehicle Speed at Failure(s) _____	Manufacturer Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	NHTSA Previously Contacted? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### APPLICABLE ACCIDENT INFORMATION

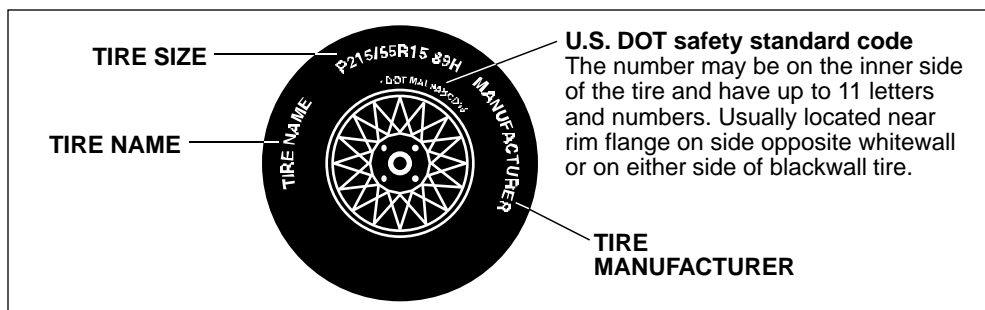
*(Use reverse side for more detailed information)*

Accident <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Fire <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Number Persons Injured	Number of Fatalities	Estimated Property Damage \$ _____	Reported to Police <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
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### INFORMATION ON TIRE FAILURE(S) (IF APPLICABLE)

To report defective or failed tires provide the following: DOT Number, Tire Manufacturer, Tire Name, Tire Size (include all numbers and letters).  
**Note: This information not required for normal operation tires.**

D	O	T									Manufacturer	Tire Name	Size
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**The Privacy Act of 1974—Public Law 93-579** This information is requested pursuant to authority vested in the National Highway Traffic Safety Act and subsequent amendments. You are under no obligation to respond to this questionnaire. Your response may be used to assist the NHTSA in determining whether a manufacturer should take appropriate action to correct a safety defect. If the NHTSA proceeds with administrative enforcement or litigation against a manufacturer, your response, or a statistical summary thereof, may be used in support of the agency's action.

